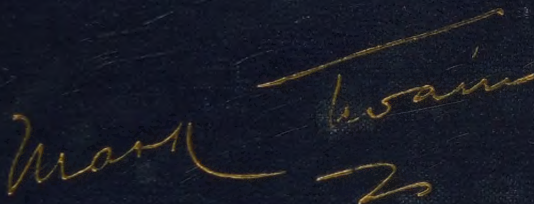


/817.4C59W>C1>V30/

28075

817.4
C59w
v.30

Paine
Mark Twain: a biography

North Central College Library
NAPERVILLE, ILL.

Books, except reserve books, may be kept one week, with privilege of renewal for like period, unless otherwise specified by librarian.

Five cents is charged for each day a book is kept overtime.

Reserve books may be drawn one half hour before closing and are due one half hour after the next opening of the library.

Five cents is charged for each hour a reserve book is kept overtime.

DATE DUE

MY -6'72

OCT 30 1984

OCT 13 RECD

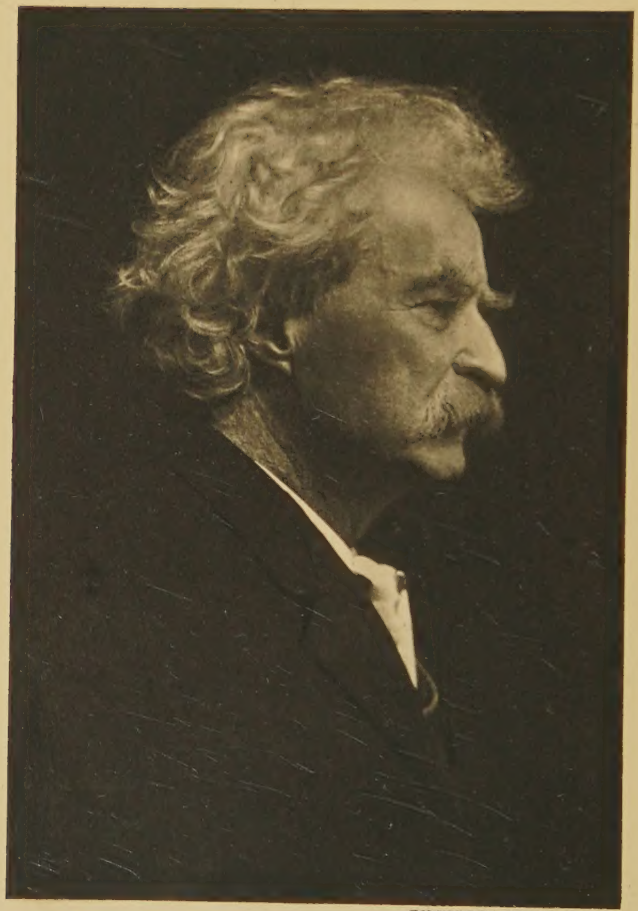
GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Stormfield Edition

THE WRITINGS OF MARK TWAIN

VOLUME XXX



PHOTOGRAPH BY HISTED

Mark Twain

MARK TWAIN

A BIOGRAPHY

THE PERSONAL AND LITERARY LIFE OF

SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS

By Albert Bigelow Paine

Stormfield Edition

VOLUME I

North Central College Library
Naperville, Illinois

Publishers

HARPER & BROTHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

MCMXXIX

Copyright, 1912, by HARPER & BROTHERS

Printed in the United States of America

I–D

21 FIFTH AVENUE

New York, March 1/07

To any friend or
acquaintance of mine—
Greeting:

By this note of general introduction I desire to recommend to your fullest trust & confidence the bearer, Albert Bigelow Paine, my biographer & particular friend, who is seeking information concerning me for use in his book.

S. L. Clemens
(Mark Twain)

TO

CLARA CLEMENS GABRILOWITSCH

WHO STEADILY UPHELD THE
AUTHOR'S PURPOSE TO WRITE
HISTORY RATHER THAN EULOGY AS
THE STORY OF HER FATHER'S LIFE

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Dear William Dean Howells, Joseph Hopkins Twichell, Joseph T. Goodman, and other old friends of Mark Twain:

I cannot let these volumes go to press without some grateful word to you who have helped me during the six years and more that have gone to their making.

First, I want to confess how I have envied you your association with Mark Twain in those days when you and he "went gipsying, a long time ago." Next, I want to express my wonder at your willingness to give me so unstintedly from your precious letters and memories, when it is in the nature of man to hoard such treasures, for himself and for those who follow him. And, lastly, I want to tell you that I do not envy you so much, any more, for in these chapters, one after another, through your grace, I have gone gipsying with you all. Neither do I wonder now, for I have come to know that out of your love for him grew that greater unselfishness (or divine selfishness, as he himself might have termed it), and that nothing short of the fullest you could do for his memory would have contented your hearts.

My gratitude is measureless; and it is world-wide, for there is no land so distant that it does not contain some one who has eagerly contributed to the story. Only, I seem so poorly able to put my thanks into words.

Albert Bigelow Paine.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
	Acknowledgment	vii
	Prefatory Note	xv
I.	Ancestors	1
II.	The Fortunes of John and Jane Clemens	5
III.	A Humble Birthplace	10
IV.	Beginning a Long Journey	14
V.	The Way of Fortune	19
VI.	A New Home	22
VII.	The Little Town of Hannibal	26
VIII.	The Farm	31
IX.	School-days	35
X.	Early Vicissitude and Sorrow	41
XI.	Days of Education	46
XII.	Tom Sawyer's Band	56
XIII.	The Gentler Side	67
XIV.	The Passing of John Clemens	72
XV.	A Young Ben Franklin	74
XVI.	The Turning-point	81
XVII.	The Hannibal "Journal"	84
XVIII.	The Beginning of a Literary Life	89
XIX.	In the Footsteps of Franklin	94
XX.	Keokuk Days	103
XXI.	A Scotchman Named Macfarlane	112
XXII.	The Old Call of the River	116
XXIII.	The Supreme Science	121
XXIV.	The River Curriculum	127
XXV.	Love-making and Adventure	132

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
XXVI.	The Tragedy of the "Pennsylvania"	139
XXVII.	The Pilot	145
XXVIII.	Piloting and Prophecy	151
XXIX.	The End of Piloting	160
XXX.	The Soldier	163
XXXI.	Over the Hills and Far Away	170
XXXII.	The Pioneer	174
XXXIII.	The Prospector	182
XXXIV.	Territorial Characteristics	188
XXXV.	The Miner	193
XXXVI.	Last Mining Days	201
XXXVII.	The New Estate	205
XXXVIII.	One of the "Staff"	210
XXXIX.	Philosophy and Poetry	216
XL.	"Mark Twain"	219
XLI.	The Cream of Comstock Humor	224
XLII.	Reportorial Days	232
XLIII.	Artemus Ward	238
XLIV.	Governor of the "Third House"	243
XLV.	A Comstock Duel	249
XLVI.	Getting Settled in San Francisco	253
XLVII.	Bohemian Days	257
XLVIII.	The Refuge of the Hills	264
XLIX.	The Jumping Frog	270
L.	Back to the Tumult	274
LI.	The Corner-stone	277
LII.	A Commission to the Sandwich Islands	281
LIII.	Anson Burlingame and the "Hornet" Disaster	285
LIV.	The Lecturer	291
LV.	Highway Robbery	297
LVI.	Back to the States	304
LVII.	Old Friends and New Plans	308

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
LVIII.	A New Book and a Lecture	312
LIX.	The First Book	318
LX.	The Innocents at Sea	324
LXI.	The Innocents Abroad	332
LXII.	The Return of the Pilgrims	340
LXIII.	In Washington—A Publishing Proposition	346
LXIV.	Olivia Langdon	352
LXV.	A Contract with Elisha Bliss, Jr.	356
LXVI.	Back to San Francisco	361
LXVII.	A Visit to Elmira	367
LXVIII.	The Rev. "Joe" Twichell	370
LXIX.	A Lecture Tour	373
LXX.	Innocents at Home — and "The Innocents Abroad"	377
LXXI.	The Great Book of Travel	382
LXXII.	The Purchase of a Paper	385
LXXIII.	The First Meeting with Howells	389
LXXIV.	The Wedding-day	391

ILLUSTRATIONS

MARK TWAIN IN 1907 . . . . . *Frontispiece*

SAMUEL L. CLEMENS AT EIGHTEEN . . . . . *Facing p.* 92

JOSEPH T. GOODMAN IN 1907 . . . . . " 214

STEAMSHIP "QUAKER CITY" AND THE AUTHOR OF "INNOCENTS ABROAD" . . . . . " 382

PREFATORY NOTE

CERTAIN happenings as recorded in this work will be found to differ materially from the same incidents and episodes as set down in the writings of Mr. Clemens himself. Mark Twain's spirit was built of the very fabric of truth, so far as moral intent was concerned, but in his earlier autobiographical writings—and most of his earlier writings were autobiographical—he made no real pretense to accuracy of time, place, or circumstance —seeking, as he said, "only to tell a good story"—while in later years an ever-vivid imagination and a capricious memory made history difficult, even when, as in his so-called "Autobiography," his effort was in the direction of fact.

"When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it happened or not," he once said, quaintly, "but I am getting old, and soon I shall remember only the latter."

The reader may be assured, where discrepancies occur, that the writer of this memoir has obtained his data from direct and positive sources: letters, diaries, account-books, or other immediate memoranda; also from the concurring testimony of eye-witnesses, supported by a unity of circumstance and conditions, and not from hearsay or vagrant printed items.

MARK TWAIN
A BIOGRAPHY

MARK TWAIN
A BIOGRAPHY

I

ANCESTORS

ON page 492 of the old volume of *Suetonius*, which Mark Twain read until his very last day, there is a reference to one Flavius Clemens, a man of wide repute "for his want of energy," and in a marginal note he has written:

"I guess this is where our line starts."

It was like him to write that. It spoke in his whimsical fashion the attitude of humility, the ready acknowledgment of shortcoming, which was his chief characteristic and made him lovable—in his personality and in his work.

Historically, we need not accept this identity of the Clemens ancestry. The name itself has a kindly meaning, and was not an uncommon one in Rome. There was an early pope by that name, and it appears now and again in the annals of the Middle Ages. More lately there was a Gregory Clemens, an English landowner who became a member of Parliament under Cromwell and signed the death-warrant of Charles I. Afterward he was tried as a regicide, his estates were confiscated, and his head was exposed on a pole on the top of Westminster Hall.

Tradition says that the family of Gregory Clemens did not remain in England, but emigrated to Virginia (or New Jersey), and from them, in direct line, descended the Virginia Clemenses, including John Marshall Clemens, the father of Mark Twain Perhaps the line could be traced, and its various steps identified, but, after all, an ancestor more or less need not matter when it is the story of a descendant that is to be written.

Of Mark Twain's immediate forebears, however, there is something to be said. His paternal grandfather, whose name also was Samuel, was a man of culture and literary taste. In 1797 he married a Virginia girl, Pamela Goggin; and of their five children John Marshall Clemens, born August 11, 1798, was the eldest—becoming male head of the family at the age of seven, when his father was accidentally killed at a house-raising. The family was not a poor one, but the boy grew up with a taste for work. As a youth he became a clerk in an iron manufactory, at Lynchburg, and doubtless studied at night. At all events, he acquired an education, but injured his health in the mean time, and somewhat later, with his mother and the younger children, removed to Adair County, Kentucky, where the widow presently married a sweetheart of her girlhood, one Simon Hancock, a good man. In due course, John Clemens was sent to Columbia, the county-seat, to study law. When the living heirs became of age he administered his father's estate, receiving as his own share three negro slaves; also a mahogany sideboard, which remains among the Clemens effects to this day.

This was in 1821. John Clemens was now a young man of twenty-three, never very robust, but with a good profession, plenty of resolution, and a heart full of hope and dreams. Sober, industrious, and unswervingly upright, it seemed certain that he must make his mark. That he was likely to be somewhat too optimistic, even visionary, was not then regarded as a misfortune.

It was two years later that he met Jane Lampton, whose mother was a Casey—a Montgomery-Casey—whose father was of the Lamptons (Lambtons) of Durham, England, and who on her own account was reputed to be the handsomest girl and the wittiest, as well as the best dancer, in all Kentucky. The Montgomerys and the Caseys of Kentucky had been Indian fighters in the Daniel Boone period, and grandmother Casey, who had been Jane Montgomery, had worn moccasins in her girlhood, and once saved her life by jumping a fence and outrunning a redskin pursuer. The Montgomery and Casey annals were full of blood-curdling adventures, and there is to-day a Casey County next to Adair, with a Montgomery County somewhat farther east. As for the Lamptons, there is an earldom in the English family, and there were claimants even then in the American branch. All these things were worth while in Kentucky, but it was rare Jane Lampton herself—gay, buoyant, celebrated for her beauty and her grace; able to dance all night, and all day too, for that matter—that won the heart of John Marshall Clemens, swept him off his feet almost at the moment of their meeting. Many of the characteristics that made Mark Twain famous were inherited from his mother. His sense of humor, his prompt, quaintly spoken philosophy, these were distinctly her contribution to his fame. Speaking of her in a later day, he once said:

"She had a sort of ability which is rare in man and hardly existent in woman—the ability to say a humorous thing with the perfect air of not knowing it to be humorous."

She bequeathed him this, without doubt; also her delicate complexion; her wonderful wealth of hair; her small, shapely hands and feet, and the pleasant drawling speech which gave her wit, and his, a serene and perfect setting.

It was a one-sided love affair, the brief courtship of Jane Lampton and John Marshall Clemens. All her

life, Jane Clemens honored her husband, and while he lived served him loyally; but the choice of her heart had been a young physician of Lexington. There had been a misunderstanding, and her prompt engagement with John Clemens was a matter of pique rather than tenderness. She stipulated that the wedding take place at once, and on May 6, 1823, they were married. She was then twenty; her husband twenty-five. More than sixty years later, when John Clemens had long been dead, she took a railway journey to a city where there was an Old Settlers' Convention, because among the names of those attending she had noticed the name of the lover of her youth. She meant to humble herself to him and ask forgiveness after all the years. She arrived too late; the convention was over, and he was gone. Mark Twain once spoke of this, and added:

"It is as pathetic a romance as any that has crossed the field of my personal experience in a long lifetime."

II

THE FORTUNES OF JOHN AND JANE CLEMENS

WITH all his ability and industry, and with the best of intentions, John Clemens would seem to have had an unerring faculty for making business mistakes. It was his optimistic outlook, no doubt—his absolute confidence in the prosperity that lay just ahead—which led him from one unfortunate locality or enterprise to another, as long as he lived. About a year after his marriage he settled with his young wife in Gainsborough, Tennessee, a mountain town on the Cumberland River, and here, in 1825, their first child, a boy, was born. They named him Orion—after the constellation, perhaps—though they changed the accent to the first syllable, calling it *O*rion. Gainsborough was a small place with few enough law cases; but it could hardly have been as small, or furnished as few cases, as the next one selected, which was Jamestown, Fentress County, still farther toward the Eastward Mountains. Yet Jamestown had the advantage of being brand new, and in the eye of his fancy John Clemens doubtless saw it the future metropolis of east Tennessee, with himself its foremost jurist and citizen. He took an immediate and active interest in the development of the place, established the county-seat there, built the first Court House, and was promptly elected as circuit clerk of the court.

It was then that he decided to lay the foundation of a fortune for himself and his children by acquiring Fentress County land. Grants could be obtained in those days

at the expense of less than a cent an acre, and John Clemens believed that the years lay not far distant when the land would increase in value ten thousand, twenty, perhaps even a hundred thousandfold. There was no wrong estimate in that. Land covered with the finest primeval timber, and filled with precious minerals, could hardly fail to become worth millions, even though his entire purchase of 75,000 acres probably did not cost him more than $500. The great tract lay about twenty miles to the southward of Jamestown. Standing in the door of the Court House he had built, looking out over the "Knob" of the Cumberland Mountains toward his vast possessions, he said:

"Whatever befalls me now, my heirs are secure. I may not live to see these acres turn into silver and gold, but my children will."

Such was the creation of that mirage of wealth, the "Tennessee land," which all his days and for long afterward would lie just ahead—a golden vision, its name the single watchword of the family fortunes—the dream fading with years, only materializing at last as a theme in a story of phantom riches, *The Gilded Age*.

Yet for once John Clemens saw clearly, and if his dream did not come true he was in no wise to blame. The land is priceless now, and a corporation of the Clemens heirs is to-day contesting the title of a thin fragment of it—about one thousand acres—overlooked in some survey.

Believing the future provided for, Clemens turned his attention to present needs. He built himself a house, unusual in its style and elegance. It had two windows in each room, and its walls were covered with plastering, something which no one in Jamestown had ever seen before. He was regarded as an aristocrat. He wore a swallow-tail coat of fine blue jeans, instead of the coarse brown native-made cloth. The blue-jeans coat was ornamented with brass buttons and cost one dollar and

twenty-five cents a yard, a high price for that locality and time. His wife wore a calico dress for company, while the neighbor wives wore homespun linsey-woolsey. The new house was referred to as the Crystal Palace. When John and Jane Clemens attended balls—there were continuous balls during the holidays—they were considered the most graceful dancers.

Jamestown did not become the metropolis he had dreamed. It attained almost immediately to a growth of twenty-five houses—mainly log houses—and stopped there. The country, too, was sparsely settled; law practice was slender and unprofitable, the circuit-riding from court to court was very bad for one of his physique. John Clemens saw his reserve of health and funds dwindling, and decided to embark in merchandise. He built himself a store and put in a small country stock of goods. These he exchanged for ginseng, chestnuts, lampblack, turpentine, rosin, and other produce of the country, which he took to Louisville every spring and fall in six-horse wagons. In the mean time he would seem to have sold one or more of his slaves, doubtless to provide capital. There was a second baby now—a little girl, Pamela—born in September, 1827. Three years later, May 1830, another little girl, Margaret, came. By this time the store and home were in one building, the store occupying one room, the household requiring two—clearly the family fortunes were declining.

About a year after little Margaret was born, John Clemens gave up Jamestown and moved his family and stock of goods to a point nine miles distant, known as the Three Forks of Wolf. The Tennessee land was safe, of course, and would be worth millions some day, but in the mean time the struggle for daily substance was becoming hard.

He could not have remained at the Three Forks long, for in 1832 we find him at still another place, on the right

bank of Wolf River, where a post-office called Pall Mall was established, with John Clemens as postmaster, usually addressed as "Squire" or "Judge." A store was run in connection with the post-office. At Pall Mall, in June, 1832, another boy, Benjamin, was born.

The family at this time occupied a log house built by John Clemens himself, the store being kept in another log house on the opposite bank of the river. He no longer practised law. In *The Gilded Age* we have Mark Twain's picture of Squire Hawkins and Obedstown, written from descriptions supplied in later years by his mother and his brother Orion; and, while not exact in detail, it is not regarded as an exaggerated presentation of east Tennessee conditions at that time. The chapter is too long and too depressing to be set down here. The reader may look it up for himself, if he chooses. If he does he will not wonder that Jane Clemens's handsome features had become somewhat sharper, and her manner a shade graver, with the years and burdens of marriage, or that John Clemens at thirty-six—out of health, out of tune with his environment—was rapidly getting out of heart. After all the bright promise of the beginning, things had somehow gone wrong, and hope seemed dwindling away.

A tall man, he had become thin and unusually pale; he looked older than his years. Every spring he was prostrated with what was called "sunpain," an acute form of headache, nerve-racking and destroying to all persistent effort. Yet he did not retreat from his moral and intellectual standards, or lose the respect of that shiftless community. He was never intimidated by the rougher element, and his eyes were of a kind that would disconcert nine men out of ten. Gray and deep-set under bushy brows, they literally looked you through. Absolutely fearless, he permitted none to trample on his rights. It is told of John Clemens, at Jamestown, that once when he had lost a cow he handed the minister on Sunday morning a notice

of the loss to be read from the pulpit, according to the custom of that community. For some reason, the minister put the document aside and neglected it. At the close of the service Clemens rose and, going to the pulpit, read his announcement himself to the congregation. Those who knew Mark Twain best will not fail to recall in him certain of his father's legacies.

The arrival of a letter from "Colonel Sellers" inviting the Hawkins family to come to Missouri is told in *The Gilded Age*. In reality the letter was from John Quarles, who had married Jane Clemens's sister, Patsey Lampton, and settled in Florida, Monroe County, Missouri. It was a momentous letter in *The Gilded Age*, and no less so in reality, for it shifted the entire scene of the Clemens family fortunes, and it had to do with the birthplace and the shaping of the career of one whose memory is likely to last as long as American history.

III

A HUMBLE BIRTHPLACE

FLORIDA, Missouri, was a small village in the early thirties—smaller than it is now, perhaps, though in that day it had more promise, even if less celebrity. The West was unassembled then, undigested, comparatively unknown. Two States, Louisiana and Missouri, with less than half a million white persons, were all that lay beyond the great river. St. Louis, with its boasted ten thousand inhabitants and its river trade with the South, was the single metropolis in all that vast uncharted region. There was no telegraph; there were no railroads, no stage lines of any consequence—scarcely any maps. For all that one could see or guess, one place was as promising as another, especially a settlement like Florida, located at the forks of a pretty stream, Salt River, which those early settlers believed might one day become navigable and carry the merchandise of that region down to the mighty Mississippi, thence to the world outside.

In those days came John A. Quarles, of Kentucky, with his wife, who had been Patsey Ann Lampton; also, later, Benjamin Lampton, her father, and others of the Lampton race. It was natural that they should want Jane Clemens and her husband to give up that disheartening east Tennessee venture and join them in this new and promising land. It was natural, too, for John Quarles—happy-hearted, generous, and optimistic—to write the letter. There were only twenty-one houses in Florida, but Quarles counted stables, out-buildings — everything

with a roof on it—and set down the number at fifty-four.

Florida, with its iridescent promise and negligible future, was just the kind of a place that John Clemens with unerring instinct would be certain to select, and the Quarles letter could have but one answer. Yet there would be the longing for companionship, too, and Jane Clemens must have hungered for her people. In *The Gilded Age*, the Sellers letter ends:

"Come!—rush!—hurry!—don't wait for anything!"

The Clemens family began immediately its preparation for getting away. The store was sold, and the farm; the last two wagon-loads of produce were sent to Louisville; and with the aid of the money realized, a few hundred dollars, John Clemens and his family "flitted out into the great mysterious blank that lay beyond the Knobs of Tennessee." They had a two-horse barouche, which would seem to have been preserved out of their earlier fortunes. The barouche held the parents and the three younger children, Pamela, Margaret, and the little boy, Benjamin. There were also two extra horses, which Orion, now ten, and Jennie, the house-girl, a slave, rode. This was early in the spring of 1835.

They traveled by the way of their old home at Columbia, and paid a visit to relatives. At Louisville they embarked on a steamer bound for St. Louis; thence overland once more through wilderness and solitude into what was then the Far West, the promised land.

They arrived one evening, and if Florida was not quite all in appearance that John Clemens had dreamed, it was at least a haven—with John Quarles, jovial, hospitable, and full of plans. The great Mississippi was less than fifty miles away. Salt River, with a system of locks and dams, would certainly become navigable to the Forks, with Florida as its head of navigation. It was a Sellers fancy, though perhaps it should be said here that

John Quarles was not the chief original of that lovely character in *The Gilded Age*. That was another relative—James Lampton, a cousin—quite as lovable, and a builder of even more insubstantial dreams.

John Quarles was already established in merchandise in Florida, and was prospering in a small way. He had also acquired a good farm, which he worked with thirty slaves, and was probably the rich man and leading citizen of the community. He offered John Clemens a partnership in his store, and agreed to aid him in the selection of some land. Furthermore, he encouraged him to renew his practice of the law. Thus far, at least, the Florida venture was not a mistake, for, whatever came, matters could not be worse than they had been in Tennessee.

In a small frame building near the center of the village, John and Jane Clemens established their household. It was a humble one-story affair, with two main rooms and a lean-to kitchen, though comfortable enough for its size, and comparatively new. It is still standing and occupied when these lines are written, and it should be preserved and guarded as a shrine for the American people; for it was here that the foremost American-born author—the man most characteristically American in every thought and word and action of his life—drew his first fluttering breath, caught blinkingly the light of a world that in the years to come would rise up and in its wide realm of letters hail him as a king.

It was on a bleak day, November 30, 1835, that he entered feebly the domain he was to conquer. Long afterward, one of those who knew him best said:

"He always seemed to me like some great being from another planet—never quite of this race or kind."

He may have been, for a great comet was in the sky that year, and it would return no more until the day when he should be borne back into the far spaces of silence and undiscovered suns. But nobody thought of this, then.

A HUMBLE BIRTHPLACE

He was a seven-months child, and there was no fanfare of welcome at his coming. Perhaps it was even suggested that, in a house so small and so sufficiently filled, there was no real need of his coming at all. One Polly Ann Buchanan, who is said to have put the first garment of any sort on him, lived to boast of the fact,[1] but she had no particular pride in that matter then. It was only a puny baby with a wavering promise of life. Still, John Clemens must have regarded with favor this first gift of fortune in a new land, for he named the little boy Samuel, after his father, and added the name of an old and dear Virginia friend, Langhorne. The family fortunes would seem to have been improving at this time, and he may have regarded the arrival of another son as a good omen.

With a family of eight, now, including Jennie, the slave-girl, more room was badly needed, and he began building without delay. The result was not a mansion, by any means, being still of the one-story pattern, but it was more commodious than the tiny two-room affair. The rooms were larger, and there was at least one ell, or extension, for kitchen and dining-room uses. This house, completed in 1836, occupied by the Clemens family during the remainder of the years spent in Florida, was often in later days pointed out as Mark Twain's birthplace. It missed that distinction by a few months, though its honor was sufficient in having sheltered his early childhood.[2]

[1] This honor has been claimed also for Mrs. Millie Upton and a Mrs. Damrell. Probably all were present and assisted.

[2] This house is no longer standing. When it was torn down several years ago, portions of it were carried off and manufactured into souvenirs. Mark Twain himself disclaimed it as his birthplace, and once wrote on a photograph of it: "No, it is too stylish, it is not my birthplace."

IV

BEGINNING A LONG JOURNEY

IT was not a robust childhood. The new baby managed to go through the winter—a matter of comment among the family and neighbors. Added strength came, but slowly; "Little Sam," as they called him, was always delicate during those early years.

It was a curious childhood, full of weird, fantastic impressions and contradictory influences, stimulating alike to the imagination and that embryo philosophy of life which begins almost with infancy. John Clemens seldom devoted any time to the company of his children. He looked after their comfort and mental development as well as he could, and gave advice on occasion. He bought a book now and then—sometimes a picture-book—and subscribed for *Peter Parley's Magazine*, a marvel of delight to the older children, but he did not join in their amusements, and he rarely, or never, laughed. Mark Twain did not remember ever having seen or heard his father laugh. The problem of supplying food was a somber one to John Clemens; also, he was working on a perpetual-motion machine at this period, which absorbed his spare time, and, to the inventor at least, was not a mirthful occupation. Jane Clemens was busy, too. Her sense of humor did not die, but with added cares and years her temper as well as her features became sharper, and it was just as well to be fairly out of range when she was busy with her employments.

Little Sam's companions were his brothers and sisters.

all older than himself: Orion, ten years his senior, followed by Pamela and Margaret at intervals of two and three years, then by Benjamin, a kindly little lad whose gentle life was chiefly devoted to looking after the baby brother, three years his junior. But in addition to these associations, there were the still more potent influences of that day and section, the intimate, enveloping institution of slavery, the daily companionship of the slaves. All the children of that time were fond of the negroes and confided in them. They would, in fact, have been lost without such protection and company.

It was Jennie, the house-girl, and Uncle Ned, a man of all work—apparently acquired with the improved prospects—who were in real charge of the children and supplied them with entertainment. Wonderful entertainment it was. That was a time of visions and dreams, small gossip and superstitions. Old tales were repeated over and over, with adornments and improvements suggested by immediate events. At evening the Clemens children, big and little, gathered about the great open fireplace while Jennie and Uncle Ned told tales and hair-lifting legends. Even a baby of two or three years could follow the drift of this primitive telling and would shiver and cling close with the horror and delight of its curdling thrill. The tales always began with "Once 'pon a time," and one of them was the story of the "Golden Arm" which the smallest listener would one day repeat more elaborately to wider audiences in many lands. Briefly it ran as follows:

"Once 'pon a time there was a man, and he had a wife, and she had a' arm of pure gold; and she died, and they buried her in the graveyard; and one night her husband went and dug her up and cut off her golden arm and tuck it home; and one night a ghost all in white come to him; and she was his wife; and she says:

"'W-h-a-r-r's my golden arm? W-h-a-r-r's my golden arm? W-h-a-r-r's my g-o-l-den arm?'"

As Uncle Ned repeated these blood-curdling questions he would look first one and then another of his listeners in the eyes, with his hands drawn up in front of his breast, his fingers turned out and crooked like claws, while he bent with each question closer to the shrinking forms before him. The tone was sepulchral, with awful pause as if waiting each time for a reply. The culmination came with a pounce on one of the group, a shake of the shoulders, and a shout of:

"'YOU'VE got it!' *and she tore him all to pieces!*"

And the children would shout "Lordy!" and look furtively over their shoulders, fearing to see a woman in white against the black wall; but, instead, only gloomy, shapeless shadows darted across it as the flickering flames in the fireplace went out on one brand and flared up on another. Then there was a story of a great ball of fire that used to follow lonely travelers along dark roads through the woods.

"Once 'pon a time there was a man, and he was riding along de road and he come to a ha'nted house, and he heard de chains a-rattlin' and a-rattlin' and a-rattlin', and a ball of fire come rollin' up and got under his stirrup, and it didn't make no difference if his horse galloped or went slow or stood still, de ball of fire staid under his stirrup till he got plum to de front do', and his wife come out and say: 'My Gord, dat's devil fire!' and she had to work a witch spell to drive it away."

"How big was it, Uncle Ned?"

"Oh, 'bout as big as your head, and I 'spect it's likely to come down dis yere chimney 'most any time."

Certainly an atmosphere like this meant a tropic development for the imagination of a delicate child. All the games and daily talk concerned fanciful semi-African conditions and strange primal possibilities. The children of that day believed in spells and charms and bad-luck signs, all learned of their negro guardians.

But if the negroes were the chief companions and protectors of the children, they were likewise one of their discomforts. The greatest real dread children knew was the fear of meeting runaway slaves. A runaway slave was regarded as worse than a wild beast, and treated worse when caught. Once the children saw one brought into Florida by six men who took him to an empty cabin, where they threw him on the floor and bound him with ropes. His groans were loud and frequent. Such things made an impression that would last a lifetime.

Slave punishment, too, was not unknown, even in the household. Jennie especially was often saucy and obstreperous. Jane Clemens, with more strength of character than of body, once undertook to punish her for insolence, whereupon Jennie snatched the whip from her hand. John Clemens was sent for in haste. He came at once, tied Jennie's wrists together with a bridle rein, and administered chastisement across the shoulders with a cowhide. These were things all calculated to impress a sensitive child.

In pleasant weather the children roamed over the country, hunting berries and nuts, drinking sugar-water, tying knots in love-vine, picking the petals from daisies to the formula "Love me—love me not," always accompanied by one or more, sometimes by half a dozen, of their small darky followers. Shoes were taken off the first of April. For a time a pair of old woolen stockings were worn, but these soon disappeared, leaving the feet bare for the summer. One of their dreads was the possibility of sticking a rusty nail into the foot, as this was liable to cause lockjaw, a malady regarded with awe and terror. They knew what lockjaw was — Uncle John Quarles's black man, Dan, was subject to it. Sometimes when he opened his mouth to its utmost capacity he felt the joints slip and was compelled to put down the cornbread, or jole and greens, or the piece of 'possum he was

eating, while his mouth remained a fixed abyss until the doctor came and restored it to a natural position by an exertion of muscular power that would have well-nigh lifted an ox.

Uncle John Quarles, his home, his farm, his slaves, all were sources of never-ending delight. Perhaps the farm was just an ordinary Missouri farm and the slaves just average negroes, but to those children these things were never apparent. There was a halo about anything that belonged to Uncle John Quarles, and that halo was the jovial, hilarious kindness of that gentle-hearted, humane man. To visit at his house was for a child to be in a heaven of mirth and pranks continually. When the children came for eggs he would say:

"Your hens won't lay, eh? Tell your maw to feed 'em parched corn and drive 'em uphill," and this was always a splendid stroke of humor to his small hearers.

Also, he knew how to mimic with his empty hands the peculiar patting and tossing of a pone of corn-bread before placing it in the oven. He would make the most fearful threats to his own children, for disobedience, but never executed any of them. When they were out fishing and returned late he would say:

"You—if I have to hunt you again after dark, I will make you smell like a burnt horn!"

Nothing could exceed the ferocity of this threat, and all the children, with delightful terror and curiosity, wondered what would happen—if it ever did happen—that would result in giving a child that peculiar savor. Altogether it was a curious early childhood that Little Sam had—at least it seems so to us now. Doubtless it was commonplace enough for that time and locality.

V

THE WAY OF FORTUNE

PERHAPS John Quarles's jocular, happy-go-lucky nature and general conduct did not altogether harmonize with John Clemens's more taciturn business methods. Notwithstanding the fact that he was a builder of dreams, Clemens was neat and methodical, with his papers always in order. He had a hearty dislike for anything resembling frivolity and confusion, which very likely were the chief features of John Quarles's storekeeping. At all events, they dissolved partnership at the end of two or three years, and Clemens opened business for himself across the street. He also practised law whenever there were cases, and was elected justice of the peace, acquiring the permanent title of "Judge." He needed some one to assist in the store, and took in Orion, who was by this time twelve or thirteen years old; but, besides his youth, Orion—all his days a visionary—was a studious, pensive lad with no taste for commerce. Then a partnership was formed with a man who developed neither capital nor business ability, and proved a disaster in the end. The modest tide of success which had come with John Clemens's establishment at Florida had begun to wane. Another boy, Henry, born in July, 1838, added one more responsibility to his burdens.

There still remained a promise of better things. There seemed at least a good prospect that the scheme for making Salt River navigable was to become operative. With even small boats (bateaux) running as high as the

lower branch of the South Fork, Florida would become an emporium of trade, and merchants and property-owners of that village would reap a harvest. An act of the Legislature was passed incorporating the navigation company, with Judge Clemens as its president. Congress was petitioned to aid this work of internal improvement. So confident was the company of success that the hamlet was thrown into a fever of excitement by the establishment of a boatyard and the actual construction of a bateau; but a Democratic Congress turned its back on the proposed improvement. No boat bigger than a skiff ever ascended Salt River, though there was a wild report, evidently a hoax, that a party of picnickers had seen one night a ghostly steamer, loaded and manned, puffing up the stream. An old Scotchman, Hugh Robinson, when he heard of it, said:

"I don't doubt a word they say. In Scotland, it often happens that when people have been killed, or are troubled, they send their spirits abroad and they are seen as much like themselves as a reflection in a looking-glass. That was a ghost of some wrecked steamboat."

But John Quarles, who was present, laughed:

"If ever anybody was in trouble, the men on that steamboat were," he said. "They were the Democratic candidates at the last election. They killed Salt River improvements, and Salt River has killed them. Their ghosts went up the river on a ghostly steamboat."

It is possible that this comment, which was widely repeated and traveled far, was the origin of the term "Going up Salt River," as applied to defeated political candidates.[1]

No other attempt was ever made to establish naviga-

[1] The dictionaries give this phrase as probably traceable to a small, difficult stream in Kentucky; but it seems more reasonable to believe that it originated in Quarles's witty comment.

tion on Salt River. Rumors of railroads already running in the East put an end to any such thought. Railroads could run anywhere and were probably cheaper and easier to maintain than the difficult navigation requiring locks and dams. Salt River lost its prestige as a possible water highway and became mere scenery. Railroads have ruined greater rivers than the Little Salt, and greater villages than Florida, though neither Florida nor Salt River has been touched by a railroad to this day. Perhaps such close detail of early history may be thought unnecessary in a work of this kind, but all these things were definite influences in the career of the little lad whom the world would one day know as Mark Twain.

VI

A NEW HOME

THE death of little Margaret was the final misfortune that came to the Clemens family in Florida. Doubtless it hastened their departure.

There was a superstition in those days that to refer to health as good luck, rather than to ascribe it to the kindness of Providence, was to bring about a judgment. Jane Clemens one day spoke to a neighbor of their good luck in thus far having lost no member of their family. That same day, when the sisters, Pamela and Margaret, returned from school, Margaret laid her books on the table, looked in the glass at her flushed cheeks, pulled out the trundle-bed, and lay down.

She was never in her right mind again. The doctor was sent for and diagnosed the case "bilious fever." One evening, about nine o'clock, Orion was sitting on the edge of the trundle-bed by the patient, when the door opened and Little Sam, then about four years old, walked in from his bedroom, fast asleep. He came to the side of the trundle-bed and pulled at the bedding near Margaret's shoulder for some time before he woke. Next day the little girl was "picking at the coverlet," and it was known that she could not live. About a week later she died. She was nine years old, a beautiful child, plump in form, with rosy cheeks, black hair, and bright eyes. This was in August, 1839. It was Little Sam's first sight of death—the first break in the Clemens family: it left a sad household. The shoemaker who lived next door

claimed to have seen several weeks previous, in a vision, the coffin and the funeral-procession pass the gate by the winding road to the cemetery, exactly as it happened.

Matters were now going badly enough with John Clemens. Yet he never was without one great comforting thought—the future of the Tennessee land. It underlaid every plan; it was an anodyne for every ill.

"When we sell the Tennessee land everything will be all right," was the refrain that brought solace in the darkest hours. A blessing for him that this was so, for he had little else to brighten his days. Negotiations looking to the sale of the land were usually in progress. When the pressure became very hard and finances were at their lowest ebb, it was offered at any price—at five cents an acre, sometimes. When conditions improved, however little, the price suddenly advanced even to its maximum of one thousand dollars an acre. Now and then a genuine offer came along, but, though eagerly welcomed at the moment, it was always refused after a little consideration.

"We will struggle along somehow, Jane," he would say. "We will not throw away the children's fortune."

There was one other who believed in the Tennessee land —Jane Clemens's favorite cousin, James Lampton, the courtliest, gentlest, most prodigal optimist of all that guileless race. To James Lampton the land always had "millions in it"—everything had. He made stupendous fortunes daily, in new ways. The bare mention of the Tennessee land sent him off into figures that ended with the purchase of estates in England adjoining those of the Durham Lamptons, whom he always referred to as "our kindred," casually mentioning the whereabouts and health of the "present earl." Mark Twain merely put James Lampton on paper when he created Colonel Sellers, and the story of the Hawkins family as told in *The Gilded Age* reflects clearly the struggle of those days. The words

"Tennessee land," with their golden promise, became his earliest remembered syllables. He grew to detest them in time, for they came to mean mockery.

One of the offers received was the trifling sum of two hundred and fifty dollars, and such was the moment's need that even this was considered. Then, of course, it was scornfully refused. In some autobiographical chapters which Orion Clemens left behind he said:

"If we had received that two hundred and fifty dollars, it would have been more than we ever made, clear of expenses, out of the whole of the Tennessee land, after forty years of worry to three generations."

What a less speculative and more logical reasoner would have done in the beginning, John Clemens did now; he selected a place which, though little more than a village, was on a river already navigable—a steamboat town with at least the beginnings of manufacturing and trade already established—that is to say, Hannibal, Missouri—a point well chosen, as shown by its prosperity to-day.

He did not delay matters. When he came to a decision, he acted quickly. He disposed of a portion of his goods and shipped the remainder overland; then, with his family and chattels loaded in a wagon, he was ready to set out for the new home. Orion records that, for some reason, his father did not invite him to get into the wagon, and how, being always sensitive to slight, he had regarded this in the light of deliberate desertion.

"The sense of abandonment caused my heart to ache. The wagon had gone a few feet when I was discovered and invited to enter. How I wished they had not missed me until they had arrived at Hannibal. Then the world would have seen how I was treated and would have cried 'Shame!'"

This incident, noted and remembered, long after became curiously confused with another, in Mark Twain's mind. In an autobiographical chapter published in *The*

North American Review he tells of the move to Hannibal and relates that he himself was left behind by his absent-minded family. The incident of his own abandonment did not happen then, but later, and somewhat differently. It would indeed be an absent-minded family if the parents, and the sister and brothers ranging up to fourteen years of age, should drive off leaving Little Sam, age four, behind.[1]

[1] As mentioned in the Prefatory Note, Mark Twain's memory played him many tricks in later life. Incidents were filtered through his vivid imagination until many of them bore little relation to the actual occurrence. Some of these lapses were only amusing, but occasionally they worked an unintentional injustice. It is the author's purpose in every instance, so far as is possible, to keep the record straight.

VII

THE LITTLE TOWN OF HANNIBAL

HANNIBAL in 1839 was already a corporate community and had an atmosphere of its own. It was a town with a distinct Southern flavor, though rather more astir than the true Southern community of that period; more Western in that it planned, though without excitement, certain new enterprises and made a show, at least, of manufacturing. It was somnolent (a slave town could not be less than that), but it was not wholly asleep—that is to say, dead—and it was tranquilly content. Mark Twain remembered it as "the white town drowsing in the sunshine of a summer morning, . . . the great Mississippi, the magnificent Mississippi, rolling its mile-wide tide along; . . . the dense forest away on the other side."

The little city was proud of its scenery, and justly so: circled with bluffs, with Holliday's Hill on the north, Lover's Leap on the south, the shining river in the foreground, there was little to be desired in the way of setting.

The river, of course, was the great highway. Rafts drifted by; steamboats passed up and down and gave communication to the outside world; St. Louis, the metropolis, was only one hundred miles away. Hannibal was inclined to rank itself as of next importance, and took on airs accordingly. It had society, too—all kinds—from the negroes and the town drunkards ("General" Gaines and Jimmy Finn; later, Old Ben Blankenship) up through several nondescript grades of mechanics and tradesmen

to the professional men of the community, who wore tall hats, ruffled shirt-fronts, and swallow-tail coats, usually of some positive color—blue, snuff-brown, and green. These and their families constituted the true aristocracy of the Southern town. Most of them had pleasant homes—brick or large frame mansions, with colonnaded entrances, after the manner of all Southern architecture of that period, which had an undoubted Greek root, because of certain drawing-books, it is said, accessible to the builders of those days. Most of them, also, had means—slaves and land which yielded an income in addition to their professional earnings. They lived in such style as was considered fitting to their rank, and had such comforts as were then obtainable.

It was to this grade of society that Judge Clemens and his family belonged, but his means no longer enabled him to provide either the comforts or the ostentation of his class. He settled his family and belongings in a portion of a house on Hill Street—the Pavey Hotel; his merchandise he established modestly on Main Street, with Orion, in a new suit of clothes, as clerk. Possibly the clothes gave Orion a renewed ambition for mercantile life, but this waned. Business did not begin actively, and he was presently dreaming and reading away the time. A little later he became a printer's apprentice, in the office of the Hannibal *Journal*, at his father's suggestion.

Orion Clemens perhaps deserves a special word here. He was to be much associated with his more famous brother for many years, and his personality as boy and man is worth at least a casual consideration. He was fifteen now, and had developed characteristics which in a greater or less degree were to go with him through life. Of a kindly, loving disposition, like all of the Clemens children, quick of temper, but always contrite, or forgiving, he was never without the fond regard of those who knew him best. His weaknesses were manifold, but, on

the whole, of a negative kind. Honorable and truthful, he had no tendency to bad habits or unworthy pursuits; indeed, he had no positive traits of any sort. That was his chief misfortune. Full of whims and fancies, unstable, indeterminate, he was swayed by every passing emotion and influence. Daily he laid out a new course of study and achievement, only to fling it aside because of some chance remark or printed paragraph or bit of advice that ran contrary to his purpose. Such a life is bound to be a succession of extremes—alternate periods of supreme exaltation and despair. In his autobiographical chapters, already mentioned, Orion sets down every impulse and emotion and failure with that faithful humility which won him always the respect, if not always the approval, of men.

Printing was a step downward, for it was a trade, and Orion felt it keenly. A gentleman's son and a prospective heir of the Tennessee land, he was entitled to a profession. To him it was punishment, and the disgrace weighed upon him. Then he remembered that Benjamin Franklin had been a printer and had eaten only an apple and a bunch of grapes for his dinner. Orion decided to emulate Franklin, and for a time he took only a biscuit and a glass of water at a meal, foreseeing the day when he should electrify the world with his eloquence. He was surprised to find how clear his mind was on this low diet and how rapidly he learned his trade.

Of the other children Pamela, now twelve, and Benjamin, seven, were put to school. They were pretty, attractive children, and Henry, the baby, was a sturdy toddler, the pride of the household. Little Sam was the least promising of the flock. He remained delicate, and developed little beyond a tendency to pranks. He was a queer, fanciful, uncommunicative child that detested indoors and would run away if not watched—always in the direction of the river. He walked in his sleep, too,

and often the rest of the household got up in the middle of the night to find him fretting with cold in some dark corner. The doctor was summoned for him oftener than was good for the family purse—or for him, perhaps, if we may credit the story of heavy dosings of those stern allopathic days.

Yet he would appear not to have been satisfied with his heritage of ailments, and was ambitious for more. An epidemic of measles—the black, deadly kind—was ravaging Hannibal, and he yearned for the complaint. He yearned so much that when he heard of a playmate, one of the Bowen boys, who had it, he ran away and, slipping into the house, crept into bed with the infection. The success of this venture was complete. Some days later, the Clemens family gathered tearfully around Little Sam's bed to see him die. According to his own after-confession, this gratified him, and he was willing to die for the glory of that touching scene. However, he disappointed them, and was presently up and about in search of fresh laurels.[1] He must have been a wearing child, and we may believe that Jane Clemens, with her varied cares and labors, did not always find him a comfort.

"You gave me more uneasiness than any child I had," she said to him once, in her old age.

"I suppose you were afraid I wouldn't live," he suggested, in his tranquil fashion.

She looked at him with that keen humor that had not dulled in eighty years. "No; afraid you *would*," she said. But that was only her joke, for she was the most tender-hearted creature in the world, and, like mothers in general, had a weakness for the child that demanded most of her mother's care.

[1] In later life Mr. Clemens did not recollect the precise period of this illness. With habitual indifference he assigned it to various years, as his mood or the exigencies of his theme required. Without doubt the "measles" incident occurred when he was very young.

It was mainly on his account that she spent her summers on John Quarles's farm near Florida, and it was during the first summer that an incident already mentioned occurred. It was decided that the whole family should go for a brief visit, and one Saturday morning in June Mrs. Clemens, with the three elder children and the baby, accompanied by Jennie, the slave-girl, set out in a light wagon for the day's drive, leaving Judge Clemens to bring Little Sam on horseback Sunday morning. The hour was early when Judge Clemens got up to saddle his horse, and Little Sam was still asleep. The horse being ready, Clemens, his mind far away, mounted and rode off without once remembering the little boy, and in the course of the afternoon arrived at his brother-in-law's farm. Then he was confronted by Jane Clemens, who demanded Little Sam.

"Why," said the Judge, aghast, "I never once thought of him after I left him asleep."

Wharton Lampton, a brother of Jane Clemens and Patsey Quarles, hastily saddled a horse and set out, helter-skelter, for Hannibal. He arrived in the early dusk. The child was safe enough, but he was crying with loneliness and hunger. He had spent most of the day in the locked, deserted house playing with a hole in the meal-sack where the meal ran out, when properly encouraged, in a tiny stream. He was fed and comforted, and next day was safe on the farm, which during that summer and those that followed it, became so large a part of his boyhood and lent a coloring to his later years.

VIII

THE FARM

WE have already mentioned the delight of the Clemens children in Uncle John Quarles's farm. To Little Sam it was probably a life-saver. With his small cousin, Tabitha,[1] just his own age (they called her Puss), he wandered over that magic domain, finding new marvels at every step, new delights everywhere. A slave-girl, Mary, usually attended them, but she was only six years older, and not older at all in reality, so she was just a playmate, and not a guardian to be feared or evaded. Sometimes, indeed, it was necessary for her to threaten to tell "Miss Patsey" or "Miss Jane," when her little charges insisted on going farther or staying later than she thought wise from the viewpoint of her own personal safety; but this was seldom, and on the whole a stay at the farm was just one long idyllic dream of summer-time and freedom.

The farm-house stood in the middle of a large yard entered by a stile made of sawed-off logs of graduated heights. In the corner of the yard were hickory trees, and black walnut, and beyond the fence the hill fell away past the barns, the corn-cribs, and the tobacco-house to a brook—a divine place to wade, with deep, dark, forbidden pools. Down in the pasture there were swings under the big trees, and Mary swung the children and ran under them until their feet touched the branches, and then took her turn and "balanced" herself so high that their one

[1] Tabitha Quarles, now Mrs. Greening, of Palmyra, Missouri, has supplied most of the material for this chapter.

wish was to be as old as Mary and swing in that splendid way. All the woods were full of squirrels—gray squirrels and the red-fox species—and many birds and flowers; all the meadows were gay with clover and butterflies, and musical with singing grasshoppers and calling larks; there were blackberries in the fence rows, apples and peaches in the orchard, and watermelons in the corn. They were not always ripe, those watermelons, and once, when Little Sam had eaten several pieces of a green one, he was seized with cramps so severe that most of the household expected him to die forthwith.

Jane Clemens was not heavily concerned.

"Sammy will pull through," she said; "he wasn't born to die that way."

It is the slender constitution that bears the strain. "Sammy" did pull through, and in a brief time was ready for fresh adventures.

There were plenty of these: there were the horses to ride to and from the fields; the ox-wagons to ride in when they had dumped their heavy loads; the circular horse-power to ride on when they threshed the wheat. This last was a dangerous and forbidden pleasure, but the children would dart between the teams and climb on, and the slave who was driving would pretend not to see. Then in the evening when the black woman came along, going after the cows, the children would race ahead and set the cows running and jingling their bells — especially Little Sam, for he was a wild-headed, impetuous child of sudden ecstasies that sent him capering and swinging his arms, venting his emotions in a series of leaps and shrieks and somersaults, and spasms of laughter as he lay rolling in the grass.

His tendency to mischief grew with this wide liberty, improved health, and the encouragement of John Quarles's good-natured, fun-loving slaves.

The negro quarters beyond the orchard were especially

attractive. In one cabin lived a bed-ridden, white-headed old woman whom the children visited daily and looked upon with awe; for she was said to be a thousand years old and to have talked with Moses. The negroes believed this; the children, too, of course, and that she had lost her health in the desert, coming out of Egypt. The bald spot on her head was caused by fright at seeing Pharaoh drowned. She also knew how to avert spells and ward off witches, which added greatly to her prestige. Uncle Dan'l was a favorite, too—kind-hearted and dependable, while his occasional lockjaw gave him an unusual distinction. Long afterward he would become Nigger Jim in the *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* tales, and so in his gentle guilelessness win immortality and the love of many men.

Certainly this was a heavenly place for a little boy, the farm of Uncle John Quarles, and the house was as wonderful as its surroundings. It was a two-story double log building, with a spacious floor (roofed in) connecting the two divisions. In the summer the table was set in the middle of that shady, breezy pavilion, and sumptuous meals were served in the lavish Southern style, brought to the table in vast dishes that left only room for rows of plates around the edge. Fried chicken, roast pig, turkeys, ducks, geese, venison just killed, squirrels, rabbits, partridges, pheasants, prairie-chickens—the list is too long to be served here. If a little boy could not improve on that bill of fare and in that atmosphere, his case was hopeless indeed. His mother kept him there until the late fall, when the chilly evenings made them gather around the wide, blazing fireplace. Sixty years later he wrote of that scene:

I can see the room yet with perfect clearness. I can see all its belongings, all its details: the family-room of the house, with the trundle-bed in one corner and the spinning-wheel in another—

a wheel whose rising and falling wail, heard from a distance, was the mournfulest of all sounds to me, and made me homesick and low-spirited, and filled my atmosphere with the wandering spirits of the dead; the vast fireplace, piled high with flaming logs, from whose ends a sugary sap bubbled out, but did not go to waste, for we scraped it off and ate it; . . . the lazy cat spread out on the rough hearthstones, the drowsy dogs braced against the jambs, blinking; my aunt in one chimney-corner and my uncle in the other smoking his corn-cob pipe; the slick and carpetless oak floor faintly mirroring the flame tongues, and freckled with black indentations where fire-coals had popped out and died a leisurely death; half a dozen children romping in the background twilight; splint-bottom chairs here and there —some with rockers; a cradle—out of service, but waiting with confidence.

One is tempted to dwell on this period, to quote prodigally from these vivid memories—the thousand minute impressions which the child's sensitive mind acquired in that long-ago time and would reveal everywhere in his work in the years to come. For him it was education of a more valuable and lasting sort than any he would ever acquire from books.

IX

SCHOOL-DAYS

NEVERTHELESS, on his return to Hannibal, it was decided that Little Sam was now ready to go to school. He was about five years old, and the months on the farm had left him wiry and lively, even if not very robust. His mother declared that he gave her more trouble than all the other children put together.

"He drives me crazy with his didoes, when he is in the house," she used to say; "and when he is out of it I am expecting every minute that some one will bring him home half dead."

He did, in fact, achieve the first of his "nine narrow escapes from drowning" about this time, and was pulled out of the river one afternoon and brought home in a limp and unpromising condition. When with mullein tea and castor-oil she had restored him to activity, she said:

"I guess there wasn't much danger. People born to be hanged are safe in water."

She declared she was willing to pay somebody to take him off her hands for a part of each day and try to teach him manners. Perhaps this is a good place to say that Jane Clemens was the original of Tom Sawyer's "Aunt Polly," and her portrait as presented in that book is considered perfect. Kind-hearted, fearless, looking and acting ten years older than her age, as women did in that time, always outspoken and sometimes severe, she was regarded as a "character" by her friends, and beloved by them as a charitable, sympathetic woman whom it

was good to know. Her sense of pity was abnormal. She refused to kill even flies, and punished the cat for catching mice. She would drown the young kittens, when necessary, but warmed the water for the purpose. On coming to Hannibal, she joined the Presbyterian Church, and her religion was of that clean-cut, strenuous kind which regards as necessary institutions hell and Satan, though she had been known to express pity for the latter for being obliged to surround himself with such poor society. Her children she directed with considerable firmness, and all were tractable and growing in grace except Little Sam. Even baby Henry at two was lisping the prayers that Sam would let go by default unless carefully guarded. His sister Pamela, who was eight years older and always loved him dearly, usually supervised these spiritual exercises, and in her gentle care earned immortality as the Cousin Mary of Tom Sawyer. He would say his prayers willingly enough when encouraged by sister Pamela, but he much preferred to sit up in bed and tell astonishing tales of the day's adventure—tales which made prayer seem a futile corrective and caused his listeners to wonder why the lightning was restrained so long. They did not know they were glimpsing the first outcroppings of a genius that would one day amaze and entertain the nations. Neighbors hearing of these things (also certain of his narrations) remonstrated with Mrs. Clemens.

"You don't believe anything that child says, I hope."

"Oh yes, I know his average. I discount him ninety per cent. The rest is pure gold." At another time she said: "Sammy is a well of truth, but you can't bring it all up in one bucket."

This, however, is digression; the incidents may have happened somewhat later.

A certain Mrs. E. Horr was selected to receive the payment for taking charge of Little Sam during several hours

each day, directing him mentally and morally in the mean time. Her school was then in a log house on Main Street (later it was removed to Third Street), and was of the primitive old-fashioned kind, with pupils of all ages, ranging in advancement from the primer to the third reader, from the tables to long division, with a little geography and grammar and a good deal of spelling. Long division and the third reader completed the curriculum in that school. Pupils who decided to take a post-graduate course went to a Mr. Cross, who taught in a frame house on the hill facing what is now the Public Square.

Mrs. Horr received twenty-five cents a week for each pupil, and opened her school with prayer; after which came a chapter of the Bible, with explanations, and the rules of conduct. Then the A B C class was called, because their recital was a hand-to-hand struggle, requiring no preparation.

The rules of conduct that first day interested Little Sam. He calculated how much he would need to trim in, to sail close to the danger-line and still avoid disaster. He made a miscalculation during the forenoon and received warning; a second offense would mean punishment. He did not mean to be caught the second time, but he had not learned Mrs. Horr yet, and was presently startled by being commanded to go out and bring a stick for his own correction.

This was certainly disturbing. It was sudden, and then he did not know much about the selection of sticks. Jane Clemens ordinarily used her hand. It required a second command to get him headed in the right direction, and he was a trifle dazed when he got outside. He had the forests of Missouri to select from, but choice was difficult. Everything looked too big and competent. Even the smallest switch had a wiry, discouraging look. Across the way was a cooper-shop with a good many shavings outside.

One had blown across and lay just in front of him. It was an inspiration. He picked it up and, solemnly entering the school-room, meekly handed it to Mrs. Horr.

Perhaps Mrs. Horr's sense of humor prompted forgiveness, but discipline must be maintained.

"Samuel Langhorne Clemens," she said (he had never heard it all strung together in that ominous way), "I am ashamed of you! Jimmy Dunlap, go and bring a switch for Sammy." And Jimmy Dunlap went, and the switch was of a sort to give the little boy an immediate and permanent distaste for school. He informed his mother when he went home at noon that he did not care for school; that he had no desire to be a great man; that he preferred to be a pirate or an Indian and scalp or drown such people as Mrs. Horr. Down in her heart his mother was sorry for him, but what she said was that she was glad there was somebody at last who could take him in hand.

He returned to school, but he never learned to like it. Each morning he went with reluctance and remained with loathing—the loathing which he always had for anything resembling bondage and tyranny or even the smallest curtailment of liberty. A school was ruled with a rod in those days, a busy and efficient rod, as the Scripture recommended. Of the smaller boys Little Sam's back was sore as often as the next, and he dreamed mainly of a day when, grown big and fierce, he would descend with his band and capture Mrs. Horr and probably drag her by the hair, as he had seen Indians and pirates do in the pictures. When the days of early summer came again; when from his desk he could see the sunshine lighting the soft green of Holliday's Hill, with the purple distance beyond, and the glint of the river, it seemed to him that to be shut up with a Webster's spelling-book and a cross teacher was more than human nature could bear. Among the records preserved from that far-off day there remains a yellow

slip, whereon in neat old-fashioned penmanship is inscribed:

MISS PAMELA CLEMENS

Has won the love of her teacher and schoolmates by her amiable deportment and faithful application to her various studies. E. HORR, *Teacher.*

If any such testimonial was ever awarded to Little Sam, diligent search has failed to reveal it. If he won the love of his teacher and playmates it was probably for other reasons.

Yet he must have learned, somehow, for he could read presently and was soon regarded as a good speller for his years. His spelling came as a natural gift, as did most of his attainments, then and later.

It has already been mentioned that Mrs. Horr opened her school with prayer and Scriptural readings. Little Sam did not especially delight in these things, but he respected them. Not to do so was dangerous. Flames were being kept brisk for little boys who were heedless of sacred matters; his home teaching convinced him of that. He also respected Mrs. Horr as an example of orthodox faith, and when she read the text "Ask and ye shall receive" and assured them that whoever prayed for a thing earnestly, his prayer would be answered, he believed it. A small schoolmate, the baker's daughter, brought gingerbread to school every morning, and Little Sam was just "honing" for some of it. He wanted a piece of that baker's gingerbread more than anything else in the world, and he decided to pray for it.

The little girl sat in front of him, but always until that morning had kept the gingerbread out of sight. Now, however, when he finished his prayer and looked up, a small morsel of the precious food lay in front of him. Perhaps the little girl could no longer stand that hungry

look in his eyes. Possibly she had heard his petition; at all events his prayer bore fruit and his faith at that moment would have moved Holliday's Hill. He decided to pray for everything he wanted, but when he tried the gingerbread supplication next morning it had no result. Grieved, but still unshaken, he tried next morning again; still no gingerbread; and when a third and fourth effort left him hungry he grew despairing and silent, and wore the haggard face of doubt. His mother said:

"What's the matter, Sammy; are you sick?"

"No," he said, "but I don't believe in saying prayers any more, and I'm never going to do it again."

"Why, Sammy, what in the world has happened?" she asked, anxiously. Then he broke down and cried on her lap and told her, for it was a serious thing in that day openly to repudiate faith. Jane Clemens gathered him to her heart and comforted him.

"I'll make you a whole pan of gingerbread, better than that," she said, "and school will soon be out, too, and you can go back to Uncle John's farm."

And so passed and ended Little Sam's first school-days.

X

EARLY VICISSITUDE AND SORROW

PROSPERITY came laggingly enough to the Clemens household. The year 1840 brought hard times: the business venture paid little or no return; law practice was not much more remunerative. Judge Clemens ran for the office of justice of the peace and was elected, but fees were neither large nor frequent. By the end of the year it became necessary to part with Jennie, the slave-girl—a grief to all of them, for they were fond of her in spite of her wilfulness, and she regarded them as "her family." She was tall, well formed, nearly black, and brought a good price. A Methodist minister in Hannibal sold a negro child at the same time to another minister who took it to his home farther South. As the steamboat moved away from the landing the child's mother stood at the water's edge, shrieking her anguish. We are prone to consider these things harshly now, when slavery has been dead for nearly half a century, but it was a sacred institution then, and to sell a child from its mother was little more than to sell to-day a calf from its lowing dam. One could be sorry, of course, in both instances, but necessity or convenience are matters usually considered before sentiment. Mark Twain once said of his mother:

"Kind-hearted and compassionate as she was, I think she was not conscious that slavery was a bald, grotesque, and unwarranted ursurpation. She had never heard it assailed in any pulpit, but had heard it defended and sanctified in a thousand. As far as her experience went,

the wise, the good, and the holy were unanimous in the belief that slavery was right, righteous, sacred, the peculiar pet of the Deity, and a condition which the slave himself ought to be daily and nightly thankful for."

Yet Jane Clemens must have had qualms at times—vague, unassembled doubts that troubled her spirit. After Jennie was gone a little black chore-boy was hired from his owner, who had bought him on the east shore of Maryland and brought him to that remote Western village, far from family and friends.

He was a cheery spirit in spite of that, and gentle, but very noisy. All day he went about singing, whistling, and whooping until his noise became monotonous, maddening. One day Little Sam said:

"Ma [that was the Southern term], make Sandy stop singing all the time. It's awful."

Tears suddenly came into his mother's eyes.

"Poor thing! He is sold away from his home. When he sings it shows maybe he is not remembering. When he's still I am afraid he is thinking, and I can't bear it."

Yet any one in that day who advanced the idea of freeing the slaves was held in abhorrence. An abolitionist was something to despise, to stone out of the community. The children held the name in horror, as belonging to something less than human; something with claws, perhaps, and a tail.

The money received for the sale of Jennie made Judge Clemens easier for a time. Business appears to have improved, too, and he was tided through another year during which he seems to have made payments on an expensive piece of real estate on Hill and Main streets. This property, acquired in November, 1839, meant the payment of some seven thousand dollars, and was a credit purchase, beyond doubt. It was well rented, but the tenants did not always pay; and presently a crisis came —a descent of creditors—and John Clemens at forty-

four found himself without business and without means. He offered everything—his cow, his household furniture, even his forks and spoons—to his creditors, who protested that he must not strip himself. They assured him that they admired his integrity so much they would aid him to resume business; but when he went to St. Louis to lay in a stock of goods he was coldly met, and the venture came to nothing.

He now made a trip to Tennessee in the hope of collecting some old debts and to raise money on the Tennessee land. He took along a negro man named Charlie, whom he probably picked up for a small sum, hoping to make something through his disposal in a better market. The trip was another failure. The man who owed him a considerable sum of money was solvent, but pleaded hard times:

> It seems so very hard upon him [John Clemens wrote home] to pay such a sum that I could not have the conscience to hold him to it. . . . I still have Charlie. The highest price I had offered for him in New Orleans was $50, in Vicksburg $40. After performing the journey to Tennessee, I expect to sell him for whatever he will bring.
>
> I do not know what I can commence for a business in the spring. My brain is constantly on the rack with the study, and I can't relieve myself of it. The future, taking its complexion from the state of my health or mind, is alternately beaming in sunshine or overshadowed with clouds; but mostly cloudy, as you may suppose. I want bodily exercise—some constant and active employment, in the first place; and, in the next place, I want to be paid for it, if possible.

This letter is dated January 7, 1842. He returned without any financial success, and obtained employment for a time in a commission-house on the levee. The proprietor found some fault one day, and Judge Clemens walked out of the premises. On his way home he stopped in a general store, kept by a man named Selms, to make

some purchases. When he asked that these be placed on account, Selms hesitated. Judge Clemens laid down a five-dollar gold piece, the last money he possessed in the world, took the goods, and never entered the place again.

When Jane Clemens reproached him for having made the trip to Tennessee, at a cost of two hundred dollars, so badly needed at this time, he only replied gently that he had gone for what he believed to be the best.

"I am not able to dig in the streets," he added, and Orion, who records this, adds:

"I can see yet the hopeless expression of his face."

During a former period of depression, such as this, death had come into the Clemens home. It came again now. Little Benjamin, a sensitive, amiable boy of ten, one day sickened, and died within a week, May 12, 1842. He was a favorite child and his death was a terrible blow. Little Sam long remembered the picture of his parents' grief; and Orion recalls that they kissed each other, something hitherto unknown.

Judge Clemens went back to his law and judicial practice. Mrs. Clemens decided to take a few boarders. Orion, by this time seventeen and a very good journeyman printer, obtained a place in St. Louis to aid in the family support.

The tide of fortune having touched low-water mark, the usual gentle stage of improvement set in. Times grew better in Hannibal after those first two or three years; legal fees became larger and more frequent. Within another two years Judge Clemens appears to have been in fairly hopeful circumstances again—able at least to invest some money in silkworm culture and lose it, also to buy a piano for Pamela, and to build a modest house on the Hill Street property, which a rich St. Louis cousin, James Clemens, had preserved for him. It was the house

which is known to-day as the "Mark Twain Home."[1] Near it, toward the corner of Main Street, was his office, and here he dispensed law and justice in a manner which, if it did not bring him affluence, at least won for him the respect of the entire community. One example will serve:

Next to his office was a stone-cutter's shop. One day the proprietor, Dave Atkinson, got into a muss with one "Fighting" MacDonald, and there was a tremendous racket. Judge Clemens ran out and found the men down, punishing each other on the pavement.

"I command the peace!" he shouted, as he came up to them.

No one paid the least attention.

"I command the peace!" he shouted again, still louder, but with no result.

A stone-cutter's mallet lay there, handy. Judge Clemens seized it and, leaning over the combatants, gave the upper one, MacDonald, a smart blow on the head.

"I command the peace!" he said, for the third time, and struck a considerably smarter blow.

That settled it. The second blow was of the sort that made MacDonald roll over, and peace ensued. Judge Clemens haled both men into his court, fined them, and collected his fee. Such enterprise in the cause of justice deserved prompt reward.

[1] This house, in 1911, was bought by Mr. and Mrs. George A. Mahan, and presented to Hannibal for a memorial museum.

XI

DAYS OF EDUCATION

THE Clemens family had made one or two moves since its arrival in Hannibal, but the identity of these temporary residences and the period of occupation of each can no longer be established. Mark Twain once said:

"In 1843 my father caught me in a lie. It is not this fact that gives me the date, but the house we lived in. We were there only a year."

We may believe it was the active result of that lie that fixed his memory of the place, for his father seldom punished him. When he did, it was a thorough and satisfactory performance.

It was about the period of moving into the new house (1844) that the *Tom Sawyer* days—that is to say, the boyhood of Samuel Clemens—may be said to have begun. Up to that time he was just Little Sam, a child—wild, and mischievous, often exasperating, but still a child—a delicate little lad to be worried over, mothered, or spanked and put to bed. Now, at nine, he had acquired health, with a sturdy ability to look out for himself, as boys will, in a community like that, especially where the family is rather larger than the income and there is still a younger child to claim a mother's protecting care. So "Sam," as they now called him, "grew up" at nine, and was full of knowledge for his years. Not that he was old in spirit or manner—he was never that, even to his death—but he had learned a great number of things, mostly of a kind not acquired at school.

They were not always of a pleasant kind; they were likely to be of a kind startling to a boy, even terrifying. Once Little Sam—he was still Little Sam, then—saw an old man shot down on the main street, at noonday. He saw them carry him home, lay him on the bed, and spread on his breast an open family Bible which looked as heavy as an anvil. He thought if he could only drag that great burden away, the poor, old dying man would not breathe so heavily. He saw a young emigrant stabbed with a bowie-knife by a drunken comrade, and noted the spurt of life-blood that followed; he saw two young men try to kill their uncle, one holding him while the other snapped repeatedly an *Allen* revolver which failed to go off. Then there was the drunken rowdy who proposed to raid the "Welshman's" house one dark, threatening night—he saw that, too. A widow and her one daughter lived there, and the ruffian woke the whole village with his coarse challenges and obscenities. Sam Clemens and a boon companion, John Briggs, went up there to look and listen. The man was at the gate, and the women were invisible in the shadow of the dark porch. The boys heard the elder woman's voice warning the man that she had a loaded gun, and that she would kill him if he stayed where he was. He replied with a ribald tirade, and she warned that she would count ten—that if he remained a second longer she would fire. She began slowly and counted up to five, with him laughing and jeering. At six he grew silent, but he did not go. She counted on: seven—eight —nine— The boys watching from the dark roadside felt their hearts stop. There was a long pause, then the final count, followed a second later by a gush of flame. The man dropped, his breast riddled. At the same instant the thunder-storm that had been gathering broke loose. The boys fled wildly, believing that Satan himself had arrived to claim the lost soul.

Many such instances happened in a town like that in

those days. And there were events incident to slavery. He saw a slave struck down and killed with a piece of slag for a trifling offense. He saw an abolitionist attacked by a mob, and they would have lynched him had not a Methodist minister defended him on a plea that he must be crazy. He did not remember, in later years, that he had ever seen a slave auction, but he added:

"I am suspicious that it is because the thing was a commonplace spectacle, and not an uncommon or impressive one. I do vividly remember seeing a dozen black men and women chained together lying in a group on the pavement, waiting shipment to a Southern slave-market. They had the saddest faces I ever saw."

It is not surprising that a boy would gather a store of human knowledge amid such happenings as these. They were wild, disturbing things. They got into his dreams and made him fearful when he woke in the middle of the night. He did not then regard them as an education. In some vague way he set them down as warnings, or punishments, designed to give him a taste for a better life. He felt that it was his own conscience that made these things torture him. That was his mother's idea, and he had a high respect for her moral opinions, also for her courage. Among other things, he had seen her one day defy a vicious devil of a Corsican—a common terror in the town—who was chasing his grown daughter with a heavy rope in his hand, declaring he would wear it out on her. Cautious citizens got out of her way, but Jane Clemens opened her door wide to the refugee, and then, instead of rushing in and closing it, spread her arms across it, barring the way. The man swore and threatened her with the rope, but she did not flinch or show any sign of fear. She stood there and shamed him and derided him and defied him until he gave up the rope and slunk off, crestfallen and conquered. Any one who could do that must have a perfect conscience, Sam thought. In the fearsome

darkness he would say his prayers, especially when a thunder-storm was coming, and vow to begin a better life in the morning. He detested Sunday-school as much as day-school, and once Orion, who was moral and religious, had threatened to drag him there by the collar; but as the thunder got louder Sam decided that he loved Sunday-school and would go the next Sunday without being invited.

Fortunately there were pleasanter things than these. There were picnics sometimes, and ferry-boat excursions. Once there was a great Fourth-of-July celebration at which it was said a real Revolutionary soldier was to be present. Some one had discovered him living alone seven or eight miles in the country. But this feature proved a disappointment; for when the day came and he was triumphantly brought in he turned out to be a Hessian, and was allowed to walk home.

The hills and woods around Hannibal where, with his playmates, he roamed almost at will were never disappointing. There was the cave with its marvels; there was Bear Creek, where, after repeated accidents, he had learned to swim. It had cost him heavily to learn to swim. He had seen two playmates drown; also, time and again he had, himself, been dragged ashore more dead than alive, once by a slave-girl, another time by a slave-man—Neal Champ, of the Pavey Hotel. In the end he had conquered; he could swim better than any boy in town of his age.

It was the river that meant more to him than all the rest. Its charm was permanent. It was the path of adventure, the gateway to the world. The river with its islands, its great slow-moving rafts, its marvelous steamboats that were like fairyland, its stately current swinging to the sea! He would sit by it for hours and dream. He would venture out on it in a surreptitiously borrowed boat when he was barely strong enough to lift

an oar out of the water. He learned to know all its moods and phases. He felt its kinship. In some occult way he may have known it as his prototype—that resistless tide of life with its ever-changing sweep, its shifting shores, its depths, its shadows, its gorgeous sunset hues, its solemn and tranquil entrance to the sea.

His hunger for the life aboard the steamers became a passion. To be even the humblest employee of one of those floating enchantments would be enough; to be an officer would be to enter heaven; to be a pilot was to be a god.

"You can hardly imagine what it meant," he reflected once, "to a boy in those days, shut in as we were, to see those steamboats pass up and down, and never to take a trip on them."

He had reached the mature age of nine when he could endure this no longer. One day, when the big packet came down and stopped at Hannibal, he slipped aboard and crept under one of the boats on the upper deck. Presently the signal-bells rang, the steamboat backed away and swung into midstream; he was really going at last. He crept from beneath the boat and sat looking out over the water and enjoying the scenery. Then it began to rain—a terrific downpour. He crept back under the boat, but his legs were outside, and one of the crew saw him. So he was taken down into the cabin and at the next stop set ashore. It was the town of Louisiana, and there were Lampton relatives there who took him home. Jane Clemens declared that his father had got to take him in hand; which he did, doubtless impressing the adventure on him in the usual way. These were all educational things; then there was always the farm, where entertainment was no longer a matter of girl-plays and swings, with a colored nurse following about, but of manlier sports with his older boy cousins, who had a gun and went hunting with the men for squirrels and partridges by day,

for coons and possums by night. Sometimes the little boy had followed the hunters all night long and returned with them through the sparkling and fragrant morning —fresh, hungry, and triumphant—just in time for breakfast.

So it is no wonder that at nine he was no longer "Little Sam," but Sam Clemens, quite mature and self-dependent, with a wide knowledge of men and things and a variety of accomplishments. He had even learned to smoke—a little—out there on the farm, and had tried tobacco-chewing, though that was a failure. He had been stung to this effort by a big girl at a school which, with his cousin Puss, he sometimes briefly attended.

"Do you use terbacker?" the big girl had asked, meaning did he chew it.

"No," he said, abashed at the confession.

"Haw!" she cried to the other scholars; "here's a boy that can't chaw terbacker."

Degraded and ashamed, he tried to correct his fault, but it only made him very ill; and he did not try again.

He had also acquired the use of certain strong, expressive words, and used them, sometimes, when his mother was safely distant. He had an impression that she would "skin him alive" if she heard him swear. His education had doubtful spots in it, but it had provided wisdom.

He was not a particularly attractive lad. He was not tall for his years, and his head was somewhat too large for his body. He had a "great ruck" of light, sandy hair which he plastered down to keep it from curling; keen blue-gray eyes, and rather large features. Still, he had a fair, delicate complexion, when it was not blackened by grime or tan; a gentle, winning manner; a smile that, with his slow, measured way of speaking, made him a favorite with his companions. He did not speak much, and his mental attainments were not highly regarded; but, for some reason, whenever he did speak every playmate in hearing

stopped whatever he was doing and listened. Perhaps it would be a plan for a new game or lark; perhaps it was something droll; perhaps it was just a commonplace remark that his peculiar drawl made amusing. Whatever it was, they considered it worth while. His mother always referred to his slow fashion of speaking as "Sammy's long talk." Her own speech was still more deliberate, but she seemed not to notice it. Henry—a much handsomer lad and regarded as far more promising—did not have it. He was a lovable, obedient little fellow whom the mischievous Sam took delight in teasing. For this and other reasons the latter's punishments were frequent enough, perhaps not always deserved. Sometimes he charged his mother with partiality. He would say:

"Yes, no matter what it is, I am always the one to get punished"; and his mother would answer:

"Well, Sam, if you didn't deserve it for that, you did for something else."

Henry Clemens became the Sid of *Tom Sawyer*, though Henry was in every way a finer character than Sid. His brother Sam always loved him, and fought *for* him oftener than *with* him.

With the death of Benjamin Clemens, Henry and Sam were naturally drawn much closer together, though Sam could seldom resist the temptation of tormenting Henry. A schoolmate, George Butler (he was a nephew of General Butler and afterward fought bravely in the Civil War), had a little blue suit with a leather belt to match, and was the envy of all. Mrs. Clemens finally made Sam and Henry suits of blue cotton velvet, and the next Sunday, after various services were over, the two sauntered about, shedding glory for a time, finally going for a stroll in the woods. They walked along properly enough, at first, then just ahead Sam spied the stump of a newly cut tree, and with a wild whooping impulse took a running leap over it. There were splinters on the stump where the

tree had broken away, but he cleared them neatly. Henry wanted to match the performance, but was afraid to try, so Sam dared him. He kept daring him until Henry was goaded to the attempt. He cleared the stump, but the highest splinters caught the slack of his little blue trousers, and the cloth gave way. He escaped injury, but the precious trousers were damaged almost beyond repair. Sam, with a boy's heartlessness, was fairly rolling on the ground with laughter at Henry's appearance.

"Cotton-tail rabbit!" he shouted. "Cotton-tail rabbit!" while Henry, weeping, set out for home by a circuitous and unfrequented road. Let us hope, if there was punishment for this mishap, that it fell in the proper locality.

These two brothers were of widely different temperament. Henry, even as a little boy, was sturdy, industrious, and dependable. Sam was volatile and elusive; his industry of an erratic kind. Once his father set him to work with a hatchet to remove some plaster. He hacked at it for a time well enough, then lay down on the floor of the room and threw his hatchet at such areas of the plaster as were not in easy reach. Henry would have worked steadily at a task like that until the last bit was removed and the room swept clean.

The home incidents in *Tom Sawyer*, most of them, really happened. Sam Clemens did clod Henry for getting him into trouble about the colored thread with which he sewed his shirt when he came home from swimming; he did inveigle a lot of boys into whitewashing a fence for him; he did give Pain-killer to Peter, the cat. There was a cholera scare that year, and Pain-killer was regarded as a preventive. Sam had been ordered to take it liberally, and perhaps thought Peter too should be safeguarded. As for escaping punishment for his misdeeds in the manner described in that book, this was a daily matter, and the methods adapted themselves to the conditions. In the

introduction to *Tom Sawyer* Mark Twain confesses to the general truth of the history, and to the reality of its characters. "Huck Finn was drawn from life," he tells us. "Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual —he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew."

The three boys were—himself, chiefly, and in a lesser degree John Briggs and Will Bowen. John Briggs was also the original of Joe Harper in that book. As for Huck Finn, his original was Tom Blankenship, neither elaborated nor qualified.

There were several of the Blankenships: there was old Ben, the father, who had succeeded "General" Gains as the town drunkard; young Ben, the eldest son—a hard case with certain good traits; and Tom—that is to say, Huck—who was just as he is described in *Tom Sawyer:* a ruin of rags, a river-rat, an irresponsible bit of human drift, kind of heart and possessing that priceless boon, absolute unaccountability of conduct to any living soul. He could come and go as he chose; he never had to work or go to school; he could do all things, good or bad, that the other boys longed to do and were forbidden. He represented to them the very embodiment of liberty, and his general knowledge of important matters, such as fishing, hunting, trapping, and all manner of signs and spells and hoodoos and incantations, made him immensely valuable as a companion. The fact that his society was prohibited gave it a vastly added charm.

The Blankenships picked up a precarious living fishing and hunting, and lived at first in a miserable house of bark, under a tree, but later moved into quite a pretentious building back of the new Clemens home on Hill Street. It was really an old barn of a place—poor and ramshackle even then; but now, more than sixty years later, a part of it is still standing. The siding of the part that stands is of black walnut, which must have been very

plentiful in that long-ago time. Old drunken Ben Blankenship never dreamed that pieces of his house would be carried off as relics because of the literary fame of his son Tom—a fame founded on irresponsibility and inconsequence. Orion Clemens, who was concerned with missionary work about this time, undertook to improve the Blankenships spiritually. Sam adopted them, outright, and took them to his heart. He was likely to be there at any hour of the day, and he and Tom had cat-call signals at night which would bring him out on the back single-story roof, and down a little arbor and flight of steps, to the group of boon companions which, besides Tom, included John Briggs, the Bowen boys, Will Pitts, and one or two other congenial spirits. They were not vicious boys; they were not really bad boys; they were only mischievous, fun-loving boys—thoughtless, and rather disregardful of the comforts and the rights of others.

XII

TOM SAWYER'S BAND

THEY ranged from Holliday's Hill on the north to the Cave on the south, and over the fields and through all the woods about. They navigated the river from Turtle Island to Glasscock's Island (now Pearl, or Tom Sawyer's, Island), and far below; they penetrated the wilderness of the Illinois shore. They could run like wild turkeys and swim like ducks; they could handle a boat as if born in one. No orchard or melon patch was entirely safe from them; no dog or slave patrol so vigilant that they did not sooner or later elude it. They borrowed boats when their owners were not present. Once when they found this too much trouble, they decided to own a boat, and one Sunday gave a certain borrowed craft a coat of red paint (formerly it had been green), and secluded it for a season up Bear Creek. They borrowed the paint also, and the brush, though they carefully returned these the same evening about nightfall, so the painter could have them Monday morning. Tom Blankenship rigged up a sail for the new craft, and Sam Clemens named it *Cecilia*, after which they didn't need to borrow boats any more, though the owner of it did; and he sometimes used to observe as he saw it pass that, if it had been any other color but red, he would have sworn it was his.

Some of their expeditions were innocent enough. They often cruised up to Turtle Island, about two miles above Hannibal, and spent the day feasting. You could have loaded a car with turtles and their eggs up there,

and there were quantities of mussels and plenty of fish. Fishing and swimming were their chief pastimes, with general marauding for adventure. Where the railroad-bridge now ends on the Missouri side was their favorite swimming-hole—that and along Bear Creek, a secluded limpid water with special interests of its own. Sometimes at evening they swam across to Glasscock's Island—the rendezvous of Tom Sawyer's "Black Avengers" and the hiding-place of Huck and Nigger Jim; then, when they had frolicked on the sand-bar at the head of the island for an hour or more, they would swim back in the dusk, a distance of half a mile, breasting the strong, steady Mississippi current without exhaustion or fear. They could swim all day, likely enough, those graceless young scamps. Once—though this was considerably later, when he was sixteen—Sam Clemens swam across to the Illinois side, and then turned and swam back again without landing, a distance of at least two miles, as he had to go. He was seized with a cramp on the return trip. His legs became useless, and he was obliged to make the remaining distance with his arms. It was a hardy life they led, and it is not recorded that they ever did any serious damage, though they narrowly missed it sometimes.

One of their Sunday pastimes was to climb Holliday's Hill and roll down big stones, to frighten the people who were driving to church. Holliday's Hill above the road was steep; a stone once started would go plunging and leaping down and bound across the road with the deadly swiftness of a twelve-inch shell. The boys would get a stone poised, then wait until they saw a team approaching, and, calculating the distance, would give it a start. Dropping down behind the bushes, they would watch the dramatic effect upon the church-goers as the great missile shot across the road a few yards before them. This was Homeric sport, but they carried it too far. Stones that had a habit of getting loose so numerously on Sundays

and so rarely on other days invited suspicion, and the "Patterollers" (river patrol—a kind of police of those days) were put on the watch. So the boys found other diversions until the Patterollers did not watch any more; then they planned a grand *coup* that would eclipse anything before attempted in the stone-rolling line.

A rock about the size of an omnibus was lying up there, in a good position to go down hill, once started. They decided it would be a glorious thing to see that great boulder go smashing down, a hundred yards or so in front of some unsuspecting and peaceful-minded church-goer. Quarrymen were getting out rock not far away, and left their picks and shovels over Sundays. The boys borrowed these, and went to work to undermine the big stone. It was a heavier job than they had counted on, but they worked faithfully, Sunday after Sunday. If their parents had wanted them to work like that, they would have thought they were being killed.

Finally one Sunday, while they were digging, it suddenly got loose and started down. They were not quite ready for it. Nobody was coming but an old colored man in a cart, so it was going to be wasted. It was not quite wasted, however. They had planned for a thrilling result, and there was thrill enough while it lasted. In the first place, the stone nearly caught Will Bowen when it started. John Briggs had just that moment quit digging and handed Will the pick. Will was about to step into the excavation when Sam Clemens, who was already there, leaped out with a yell:

"Look out, boys, she's coming!"

She came. The huge stone kept to the ground at first, then, gathering a wild momentum, it went bounding into the air. About half-way down the hill it struck a tree several inches through and cut it clean off. This turned its course a little, and the negro in the cart, who heard the noise, saw it come crashing in his direction and made a

wild effort to whip up his mule. It was also headed toward a cooper-shop across the road. The boys watched it with growing interest. It made longer leaps with every bound, and whenever it struck, fragments and dust would fly. They were certain it would demolish the negro and destroy the cooper-shop. The shop was empty, it being Sunday, but the rest of the catastrophe would invite close investigation, with results. They wanted to fly, but they could not move until they saw the rock land. It was making mighty leaps now, and the terrified negro had managed to get directly in its path. They stood holding their breath, their mouths open. Then suddenly they could hardly believe their eyes; the boulder struck a projection a distance above the road, and with a mighty bound sailed clear over the negro and his mule and landed in the soft dirt beyond—only a fragment striking the shop, damaging but not wrecking it. Half buried in the ground, that boulder lay there for nearly forty years; then it was blasted up for milling purposes. It was the last rock the boys ever rolled down. They began to suspect that the sport was not altogether safe.

Sometimes the boys needed money, which was not easy to get in those days. On one occasion of this sort, Tom Blankenship had the skin of a coon he had captured, which represented the only capital in the crowd. At Selms's store on Wild Cat corner the coonskin would bring ten cents, but that was not enough. They arranged a plan which would make it pay a good deal more than that. Selms's window was open, it being summer-time, and his pile of pelts was pretty handy. Huck—that is to say, Tom—went in the front door and sold the skin for ten cents to Selms, who tossed it back on the pile. Tom came back with the money and after a reasonable period went around to the open window, crawled in, got the coonskin, and sold it to Selms again. He did this several times that afternoon; then John Pierce, Selms's clerk, said:

"Look here, Selms, there is something wrong about this. That boy has been selling us coonskins all the afternoon."

Selms went to his pile of pelts. There were several sheepskins and some cowhides, but only one coonskin—the one he had that moment bought. Selms himself used to tell this story as a great joke.

Perhaps it is not adding to Mark Twain's reputation to say that the boy Sam Clemens—a pretty small boy, a good deal less than twelve at this time—was the leader of this unhallowed band; yet any other record would be less than historic. If the band had a leader, it was he. They were always ready to listen to him—they would even stop fishing to do that—and to follow his projects. They looked to him for ideas and organization, whether the undertaking was to be real or make-believe. When they played "Bandit" or "Pirate" or "Indian," Sam Clemens was always chief; when they became real raiders it is recorded that he was no less distinguished. Like Tom Sawyer, he loved the glare and trappings of leadership. When the Christian Sons of Temperance came along with a regalia, and a red sash that carried with it rank and the privilege of inventing pass-words, the gaud of these things got into his eyes, and he gave up smoking (which he did rather gingerly) and swearing (which he did only under heavy excitement), also liquor (though he had never tasted it yet), and marched with the newly washed and pure in heart for a full month—a month of splendid leadership and servitude. Then even the red sash could not hold him in bondage. He looked up Tom Blankenship and said:

"Say, Tom, I'm blamed tired of this! Let's go somewhere and smoke!" Which must have been a good deal of a sacrifice, for the uniform was a precious thing.

Limelight and the center of the stage was a passion of Sam Clemens's boyhood, a love of the spectacular that

never wholly died. It seems almost a pity that in those far-off barefoot days he could not have looked down the years to a time when, with the world at his feet, venerable Oxford should clothe him in a scarlet gown.

He could not by any chance have dreamed of that stately honor. His ambitions did not lie in the direction of mental achievement. It is true that now and then, on Friday at school, he read a composition, one of which—a personal burlesque on certain older boys—came near resulting in bodily damage. But any literary ambition he may have had in those days was a fleeting thing. His permanent dream was to be a pirate, or a pilot, or a bandit, or a trapper-scout; something gorgeous and active, where his word—his nod, even—constituted sufficient law. The river kept the pilot ambition always fresh, and the cave supplied a background for those other things.

The cave was an enduring and substantial joy. It was a real cave; not merely a hole, but a subterranean marvel of deep passages and vaulted chambers that led away into bluffs and far down into the earth's black silences, even below the river, some said. For Sam Clemens the cave had a fascination that never faded. Other localities and diversions might pall, but any mention of the cave found him always eager and ready for the three-mile walk or pull that brought them to its mystic door. With its long corridors, its royal chambers hung with stalactites, its remote hiding-places, its possibilities as the home of a gallant outlaw band, it contained everything that a romantic boy could love or long for. In *Tom Sawyer* Indian Joe dies in the cave. He did not die there in real life, but was lost there once, and was living on bats when they found him. He was a dissolute reprobate, and when, one night, he did die there came up a thunder-storm so terrific that Sam Clemens at home and in bed was certain that Satan had come in person for the half-breed's wicked soul. He covered his head and said his prayers industriously, in the

fear that the evil one might conclude to save another trip by taking him along, too.

The treasure-digging adventure in the book had a foundation in fact. There was a tradition concerning some French trappers who long before had established a trading-post two miles above Hannibal, on what is called the "bay." It is said that, while one of these trappers was out hunting, Indians made a raid on the post and massacred the others. The hunter on returning found his comrades killed and scalped, but the Indians had failed to find the treasure which was buried in a chest. He left it there, swam across to Illinois, and made his way to St. Louis, where he told of the massacre and the burial of the chest of gold. Then he started to raise a party to go back for it, but was taken sick and died. Later some men came up from St. Louis looking for the chest. They did not find it, but they told the circumstances, and afterward a good many people tried to find the gold.

Tom Blankenship one morning came to Sam Clemens and John Briggs and said he was going to dig up the treasure. He said he had dreamed just where it was, and said if they would go with him and dig he would divide up. The boys had great faith in dreams, especially Tom's dreams. Tom's unlimited freedom gave him a large importance in their eyes. The dreams of a boy like that were pretty sure to mean something. They followed Tom to the place with some shovels and a pick, and he showed them where to dig. Then he sat down under the shade of a papaw-tree and gave orders.

They dug nearly all day. Now and then they stopped to rest, and maybe to wonder a little why Tom didn't dig some himself; but, of course, he had done the dreaming, which entitled him to an equal share.

They did not find it that day, and when they went back next morning they took two long iron rods; these they would push and drive into the ground until they struck something

hard. Then they would dig down to see what it was, but it never turned out to be money. That night the boys declared they would not dig any more. But Tom had another dream. He dreamed the gold was exactly under the little papaw-tree. This sounded so circumstantial that they went back and dug another day. It was hot weather too, August, and that night they were nearly dead. Even Tom gave it up, then. He said there was something about the way they dug, but he never offered to do any digging himself.

This differs considerably from the digging incident in the book, but it gives us an idea of the respect the boys had for the ragamuffin original of Huckleberry Finn.[1] Tom Blankenship's brother, Ben, was also drawn upon for that creation, at least so far as one important phase of Huck's character is concerned. He was considerably older, as well as more disreputable, than Tom. He was inclined to torment the boys by tying knots in their clothes when they went swimming, or by throwing mud at them when they wanted to come out, and they had no deep love for him. But somewhere in Ben Blankenship there was a fine generous strain of humanity that provided Mark Twain with that immortal episode in the story of Huck Finn—the sheltering of Nigger Jim.

This is the real story:

A slave ran off from Monroe County, Missouri, and got across the river into Illinois. Ben used to fish and hunt over there in the swamps, and one day found him. It was considered a most worthy act in those days to return a runaway slave; in fact, it was a crime not to do it. Besides, there was for this one a reward of fifty dollars, a fortune to ragged outcast Ben Blankenship. That money and the honor he could acquire must have been tempting

[1] Much of the detail in this chapter was furnished to the writer by John Briggs shortly before his death in 1907.

to the waif, but it did not outweigh his human sympathy. Instead of giving him up and claiming the reward, Ben kept the runaway over there in the marshes all summer. The negro would fish and Ben would carry him scraps of other food. Then, by and by, it leaked out. Some wood-choppers went on a hunt for the fugitive, and chased him to what was called "Bird Slough." There trying to cross a drift he was drowned.

In the book, the author makes Huck's struggle a psychological one between conscience and the law, on one side, and sympathy on the other. With Ben Blankenship the struggle—if there was a struggle—was probably between sympathy and cupidity. He would care very little for conscience and still less for law. His sympathy with the runaway, however, would be large and elemental, and it must have been *very* large to offset the lure of that reward.

There was a gruesome sequel to this incident. Some days following the drowning of the runaway, Sam Clemens, John Briggs, and the Bowen boys went to the spot and were pushing the drift about, when suddenly the negro rose before them, straight and terrible, about half his length out of the water. He had gone down feet foremost, and the loosened drift had released him. The boys did not stop to investigate. They thought he was after them and flew in wild terror, never stopping until they reached human habitation.

How many gruesome experiences there appear to have been in those early days! In *The Innocents Abroad* Mark Twain tells of the murdered man he saw one night in his father's office. The man's name was McFarlane. He had been stabbed that day in the old Hudson-McFarlane feud and carried in there to die. Sam Clemens and John Briggs had run away from school and had been sky-larking all that day, and knew nothing of the affair. Sam decided that his father's office was safer for him than

to face his mother, who was probably sitting up, waiting. He tells us how he lay on the lounge, and how a shape on the floor gradually resolved itself into the outlines of a man; how a square of moonlight from the window approached it and gradually revealed the dead face and the ghastly stabbed breast.

"I went out of there," he says. "I do not say that I went away in any sort of a hurry, but I simply went; that is sufficient. I went out of the window, and I carried the sash along with me. I did not need the sash, but it was handier to take it than to leave it, and so I took it. I was not scared, but I was considerably agitated."

He was not yet twelve, for his father was no longer alive when the boy reached that age. Certainly these were disturbing, haunting things. Then there was the case of the drunken tramp in the calaboose to whom the boys kind-heartedly enough carried food and tobacco. Sam Clemens spent some of his precious money to buy the tramp a box of lucifer matches—a brand new invention then, scarce and high. The tramp started a fire with the matches and burned down the calaboose, himself in it. For weeks the boy was tortured, awake and in his dreams, by the thought that if he had not carried the man the matches the tragedy could not have happened. Remorse was always Samuel Clemens's surest punishment. To his last days on earth he never outgrew its pangs.

What a number of things crowded themselves into a few brief years! It is not easy to curtail these boyhood adventures of Sam Clemens and his scapegrace friends, but one might go on indefinitely with their mad doings. They were an unpromising lot. Ministers and other sober-minded citizens freely prophesied sudden and violent ends for them, and considered them hardly worth praying for. They must have proven a disappointing lot to those prophets. The Bowen boys became fine river-pilots; Will Pitts was in due time a leading merchant and bank

director; John Briggs grew into a well-to-do and highly respected farmer; even Huck Finn—that is to say, Tom Blankenship—is reputed to have ranked as an honored citizen and justice of the peace in a Western town. But in those days they were a riotous, fun-loving band with little respect for order and even less for ordinance.

XIII

THE GENTLER SIDE

HIS associations were not all of that lawless breed. At his school (he had sampled several places of learning, and was now at Mr. Cross's on the Square) were a number of less adventurous, even if not intrinsically better, playmates. There was George RoBards, the Latin scholar, and John, his brother, a handsome boy, who rode away at last with his father into the sunset, to California, his golden curls flying in the wind. And there was Jimmy McDaniel, a kind-hearted boy, whose company was worth while, because his father was a confectioner, and he used to bring candy and cake to school. Also there was Buck Brown, a rival speller, and John Meredith, the doctor's son, and John Garth, who was one day to marry little Helen Kercheval, and in the end would be remembered and honored with a beautiful memorial building not far from the site of the old school.

Furthermore, there were a good many girls. Tom Sawyer had an impressionable heart, and Sam Clemens no less so. There was Bettie Ormsley, and Artemisia Briggs, and Jennie Brady; also Mary Miller, who was nearly twice his age and gave him his first broken heart.

"I believe I was as miserable as a grown man could be," he said once, remembering.

Tom Sawyer had heart sorrows too, and we may imagine that his emotions at such times were the emotions of Sam Clemens, say at the age of ten.

But, as Tom Sawyer had one faithful sweetheart, so did

he. They were one and the same. Becky Thatcher in the book was Laura Hawkins in reality. The acquaintance of these two had begun when the Hawkins family moved into the Virginia house on the corner of Hill and Main streets.[1] The Clemens family was then in the new home across the way, and the children were soon acquainted. The boy could be tender and kind, and was always gentle in his treatment of the other sex. They visited back and forth, especially around the new house, where there were nice pieces of boards and bricks for play-houses. So they played "keeping house," and if they did not always agree—well, since the beginning of the world sweethearts have not always agreed, even in Arcady. Once when they were building a house—and there may have been some difference of opinion as to its architecture—the boy happened to let a brick fall on the little girl's finger. If there had been any disagreement it vanished instantly with that misfortune. He tried to comfort her and soothe the pain; then he wept with her and suffered most of the two, no doubt. So, you see, he was just a little boy, after all, even though he was already chief of a red-handed band, the "Black Avengers of the Spanish Main."

He was always a tender-hearted lad. He would never abuse an animal, unless, as in the Pain-killer incident, his tendency to pranking ran away with him. He had indeed a genuine passion for cats; summers when he went to the farm he never failed to take his cat in a basket. When he ate, it sat in a chair beside him at the table. His sympathy included inanimate things as well. He loved flowers—not as the embryo botanist or gardener, but as a

[1] The Hawkins family in real life bore no resemblance to the family of that name in *The Gilded Age*. Judge Hawkins of *The Gilded Age*, as already noted, was John Clemens. Mark Twain used the name Hawkins, also the name of his boyhood sweetheart, Laura, merely for old times' sake, and because in portraying the childhood of Laura Hawkins he had a picture of the real Laura in his mind.

personal friend. He pitied the dead leaf and the murmuring dried weed of November because their brief lives were ended, and they would never know the summer again, or grow glad with another spring. His heart went out to them; to the river and the sky, the sunlit meadow and the drifted hill. That his observation of all nature was minute and accurate is shown everywhere in his writing; but it was never the observation of a young naturalist: it was the subconscious observation of sympathetic love.

We are wandering away from his school-days. They were brief enough and came rapidly to an end. They will not hold us long. Undoubtedly Tom Sawyer's distaste for school and his excuses for staying at home—usually some pretended illness—have ample foundation in the boyhood of Sam Clemens. His mother punished him and pleaded with him, alternately. He detested school as he detested nothing else on earth, even going to church. "Church ain't worth shucks," said Tom Sawyer, but it was better than school.

As already noted, the school of Mr. Cross stood in or near what is now the Square in Hannibal. The Square was only a grove then, grown up with plum, hazel, and vine—a rare place for children. At recess and the noon hour the children climbed trees, gathered flowers, and swung in grape-vine swings. There was a spelling-bee every Friday afternoon, for Sam the only endurable event of the school exercises. He could hold the floor at spelling—longer than Buck Brown. This was spectacular and showy; it invited compliments even from Mr. Cross, whose name must have been handed down by angels, it fitted him so well. One day Sam Clemens wrote on his slate:

> Cross by name and cross by nature—
> Cross jumped over an Irish potato.

He showed this to John Briggs, who considered it a stroke of genius. He urged the author to write it on the

board at noon, but the poet's ambition did not go so far.

"Oh, pshaw!" said John. "I wouldn't be afraid to do it."

"I *dare* you to do it," said Sam.

John Briggs never took a dare, and at noon, when Mr. Cross had gone home to dinner, he wrote flamingly the descriptive couplet. When the teacher returned and "books" were called he looked steadily at John Briggs. He had recognized the penmanship.

"Did you do that?" he asked, ominously.

It was a time for truth.

"Yes, sir," said John.

"Come here!" And John came, and paid for his exploitation of genius heavily. Sam Clemens expected that the next call would be for "author," but for some reason the investigation ended there. It was unusual for him to escape. His back generally kept fairly warm from one "frailing" to the next.

His rewards were not all of a punitive nature. There were two medals in the school, one for spelling, the other for amiability. They were awarded once a week, and the holders wore them about the neck conspicuously, and were envied accordingly. John RoBards—he of the golden curls—wore almost continuously the medal for amiability, while Sam Clemens had a mortgage on the medal for spelling. Sometimes they traded, to see how it would seem, but the master discouraged this practice by taking the medals away from them for the remainder of the week. Once Sam Clemens lost the medal by leaving the first "r" out of February. He could have spelled it backward, if necessary; but Laura Hawkins was the only one on the floor against him, and he was a gallant boy.

The picture of that school as presented in the book

written thirty years later is faithful, we may believe, and the central figure is a tender-hearted, romantic, devil-may-care lad, loathing application and longing only for freedom. It was a boon which would come to him sooner even than he had dreamed.

XIV

THE PASSING OF JOHN CLEMENS

JUDGE CLEMENS, who time and again had wrecked or crippled his fortune by devices more or less unusual, now adopted the one unfailing method of achieving disaster. He endorsed a large note, for a man of good repute, and the payment of it swept him clean: home, property, everything vanished again. The St. Louis cousin took over the home and agreed to let the family occupy it on payment of a small interest; but after an attempt at housekeeping with a few scanty furnishings and Pamela's piano—all that had been saved from the wreck—they moved across the street into a portion of the Virginia house, then occupied by a Dr. Grant. The Grants proposed that the Clemens family move over and board them, a welcome arrangement enough at this time.

Judge Clemens had still a hope left. The clerkship of the Surrogate Court was soon to be filled by election. It was an important remunerative office, and he was regarded as the favorite candidate for the position. His disaster had aroused general sympathy, and his nomination and election were considered sure. He took no chances; he made a canvass on horseback from house to house, often riding through rain and the chill of fall, acquiring a cough which was hard to overcome. He was elected by a heavy majority, and it was believed he could hold the office as long as he chose. There seemed no further need of worry. As soon as he was installed in

office they would live in a style becoming their social position. About the end of February he rode to Palmyra to be sworn in. Returning he was drenched by a storm of rain and sleet, arriving at last half frozen. His system was in no condition to resist such a shock. Pneumonia followed; physicians came with torments of plasters and allopathic dosings that brought no relief. Orion returned from St. Louis to assist in caring for him, and sat by his bed, encouraging him and reading to him, but it was evident that he grew daily weaker. Now and then he became cheerful and spoke of the Tennessee land as the seed of a vast fortune that must surely flower at last. He uttered no regrets, no complaints. Once only he said:

"I believe if I had stayed in Tennessee I might have been worth twenty thousand dollars to-day."

On the morning of the 24th of March, 1847, it was evident that he could not live many hours. He was very weak. When he spoke, now and then, it was of the land. He said it would soon make them all rich and happy.

"Cling to the land," he whispered. "Cling to the land, and wait. Let nothing beguile it away from you."

A little later he beckoned to Pamela, now a lovely girl of nineteen, and, putting his arm about her neck, kissed her for the first time in years.

"Let me die," he said.

He never spoke after that. A little more, and the sad, weary life that had lasted less than forty-nine years was ended. A dreamer and a moralist, an upright man honored by all, he had never been a financier. He ended life with less than he had begun.

XV

A YOUNG BEN FRANKLIN

FOR a third time death had entered the Clemens home: not only had it brought grief now, but it had banished the light of new fortune from the very threshold. The disaster seemed complete.

The children were dazed. Judge Clemens had been a distant, reserved man, but they had loved him, each in his own way, and they had honored his uprightness and nobility of purpose. Mrs. Clemens confided to a neighbor that, in spite of his manner, her husband had been always warm-hearted, with a deep affection for his family. They remembered that he had never returned from a journey without bringing each one some present, however trifling. Orion, looking out of his window next morning, saw old Abram Kurtz, and heard him laugh. He wondered how anybody could still laugh.

The boy Sam was fairly broken down. Remorse, which always dealt with him unsparingly, laid a heavy hand on him now. Wildness, disobedience, indifference to his father's wishes, all were remembered; a hundred things, in themselves trifling, became ghastly and heart-wringing in the knowledge that they could never be undone. Seeing his grief, his mother took him by the hand and led him into the room where his father lay.

"It is all right, Sammy," she said. "What's done is done, and it does not matter to him any more; but here by the side of him now I want you to promise me—"

He turned, his eyes streaming with tears, and flung himself into her arms.

"I will promise anything," he sobbed, "if you won't make me go to school! Anything!"

His mother held him for a moment, thinking, then she said:

"No, Sammy; you need not go to school any more. Only promise me to be a better boy. Promise not to break my heart."

So he promised her to be a faithful and industrious man, and upright, like his father. His mother was satisfied with that. The sense of honor and justice was already strong within him. To him a promise was a serious matter at any time; made under conditions like these it would be held sacred.

That night—it was after the funeral—his tendency to somnambulism manifested itself. His mother and sister, who were sleeping together, saw the door open and a form in white enter. Naturally nervous at such a time, and living in a day of almost universal superstition, they were terrified and covered their heads. Presently a hand was laid on the coverlet, first at the foot, then at the head of the bed. A thought struck Mrs. Clemens:

"Sam!" she said.

He answered, but he was sound asleep and fell to the floor. He had risen and thrown a sheet around him in his dreams. He walked in his sleep several nights in succession after that. Then he slept more soundly.

Orion returned to St. Louis. He was a very good book and job printer by this time and received a salary of ten dollars a week (high wages in those frugal days), of which he sent three dollars weekly to the family. Pamela, who had acquired a considerable knowledge of the piano and guitar, went to the town of Paris, in Monroe County, about fifty miles away, and taught a class of music pupils, contributing whatever remained after paying for her board

and clothing to the family fund. It was a hard task for the girl, for she was timid and not over-strong; but she was resolute and patient, and won success. Pamela Clemens was a noble character and deserves a fuller history than can be afforded in this work.

Mrs. Clemens and her son Samuel now had a sober talk, and, realizing that the printing trade offered opportunity for acquiring further education as well as a livelihood, they agreed that he should be apprenticed to Joseph P. Ament, who had lately moved from Palmyra to Hannibal and bought a weekly Democrat paper, the Missouri *Courier*. The apprentice terms were not over-liberal. They were the usual thing for that time: board and clothes —"more board than clothes, and not much of either," Mark Twain used to say.

"I was supposed to get two suits of clothes a year, like a nigger, but I didn't get them. I got one suit and took the rest out in Ament's old garments, which didn't fit me in any noticeable way. I was only about half as big as he was, and when I had on one of his shirts I felt as if I had on a circus tent. I had to turn the trousers up to my ears to make them short enough."

There was another apprentice, a young fellow of about eighteen, named Wales McCormick, a devilish fellow and a giant. Ament's clothes were too small for Wales, but he had to wear them, and Sam Clemens and Wales McCormick together, fitted out with Ament's clothes, must have been a picturesque pair. There was also, for a time, a boy named Ralph; but he appears to have presented no features of a striking sort, and the memory of him has become dim.

The apprentices ate in the kitchen at first, served by the old slave-cook and her handsome mulatto daughter; but those printer's "devils" made it so lively there that in due time they were promoted to the family table, where they sat with Mr. and Mrs. Ament and the one journey-

man, Pet McMurry — a name that in itself was an inspiration. What those young scamps did not already know Pet McMurry could teach them. Sam Clemens had promised to be a good boy, and he was, by the standards of boyhood. He was industrious, regular at his work, quick to learn, kind, and truthful. Angels could hardly be more than that in a printing-office; but when food was scarce even an angel—a young printer angel—could hardly resist slipping down the cellar stairs at night for raw potatoes, onions, and apples which they carried into the office, where the boys slept on a pallet on the floor, and this forage they cooked on the office stove. Wales especially had a way of cooking a potato that his associate never forgot.

It is unfortunate that no photographic portrait has been preserved of Sam Clemens at this period. But we may imagine him from a letter which, long years after, Pet McMurry wrote to Mark Twain. He said:

> If your memory extends so far back, you will recall a little sandy-haired boy[1] of nearly a quarter of a century ago, in the printing-office at Hannibal, over the Brittingham drug-store, mounted upon a little box at the case, pulling away at a huge cigar or a diminutive pipe, who used to love to sing so well the expression of the poor drunken man who was supposed to have fallen by the wayside: "*If ever I get up again, I'll stay up—if I kin.*" . . . Do you recollect any of the serious conflicts that mirth-loving brain of yours used to get you into with that *diminutive* creature Wales McCormick—how you used to call upon me to hold your cigar or pipe, whilst you went *entirely through* him?

This is good testimony, without doubt. When he had been with Ament little more than a year Sam had become

[1] The color of Mark Twain's hair in early life has been variously referred to as red, black, and brown. It was, in fact, as stated by McMurry, "sandy" in boyhood, deepening later to that rich, mahogany tone known as auburn.

office favorite and chief standby. Whatever required intelligence and care and imagination was given to Sam Clemens. He could set type as accurately and almost as rapidly as Pet McMurry; he could wash up the forms a good deal better than Pet; and he could run the job-press to the tune of "Annie Laurie" or "Along the Beach at Rockaway," without missing a stroke or losing a finger. Sometimes, at odd moments, he would "set up" one of the popular songs or some favorite poem like "The Blackberry Girl," and of these he sent copies printed on cotton, even on scraps of silk, to favorite girl friends; also to Puss Quarles, on his uncle's farm, where he seldom went now, because he was really grown up, associating with men and doing a man's work. He had charge of the circulation—which is to say, he carried the papers. During the last year of the Mexican War, when a telegraph-wire found its way across the Mississippi to Hannibal—a long sagging span, that for some reason did not break of its own weight—he was given charge of the extras with news from the front; and the burning importance of his mission, the bringing of news hot from the field of battle, spurred him to endeavors that won plaudits and success.

He became a sort of subeditor. When the forms of the paper were ready to close and Ament was needed to supply more matter, it was Sam who was delegated to find that rather uncertain and elusive person and labor with him until the required copy was produced. Thus it was he saw literature in the making.

It is not believed that Sam had any writing ambitions of his own. His chief desire was to be an all-round journeyman printer like Pet McMurry; to drift up and down the world in Pet's untrammeled fashion; to see all that Pet had seen and a number of things which Pet appeared to have overlooked. He varied on occasion from this ambition. When the first negro minstrel show visited Hannibal and had gone, he yearned for a brief period to

be a magnificent "middle man" or even the "end man" of that combination; when the circus came and went, he dreamed of the day when, a capering frescoed clown, he would set crowded tiers of spectators guffawing at his humor; when the traveling hypnotist arrived, he volunteered as a subject, and amazed the audience by the marvel of his performance.

In later life he claimed that he had not been hypnotized in any degree, but had been pretending throughout—a statement always denied by his mother and his brother Orion. This dispute was never settled, and never could be. Sam Clemens's tendency to somnambulism would seem to suggest that he really might have taken on a hypnotic condition, while his consummate skill as an actor, then and always, and his early fondness of exhibition and a joke, would make it not unlikely that he was merely "showing off" and having his fun. He could follow the dictates of a vivid imagination and could be as outrageous as he chose without incurring responsibility of any sort. But there was a penalty: he must allow pins and needles to be thrust into his flesh and suffer these tortures without showing discomfort to the spectators. It is difficult to believe that any boy, however great his exhibitory passion, could permit, in the full possession of his sensibilities, a needle to be thrust deeply into his flesh without manifestations of a most unmesmeric sort. The conclusion seems warranted that he began by pretending, but that at times he was at least under semi-mesmeric control. At all events, he enjoyed a week of dazzling triumph, though in the end he concluded to stick to printing as a trade.

We have said that he was a rapid learner and a neat workman. At Ament's he generally had a daily task, either of composition or press-work, after which he was free. When he had got the hang of his work he was usually done by three in the afternoon; then away to the river or the cave, as in the old days, sometimes with his

boy friends, sometimes with Laura Hawkins gathering wild columbine on that high cliff overlooking the river, Lover's Leap.

He was becoming quite a beau, attending parties on occasion, where old-fashioned games—Forfeits, Ring-around-a-Rosy, Dusty Miller, and the like—were regarded as rare amusements. He was a favorite with girls of his own age. He was always good-natured, though he played jokes on them, too, and was often a severe trial. He was with Laura Hawkins more than the others, usually her escort. On Saturday afternoons in winter he carried her skates to Bear Creek and helped her to put them on. After which they skated "partners," holding hands tightly, and were a likely pair of children, no doubt. In *The Gilded Age* Laura Hawkins at twelve is pictured "with her dainty hands propped into the ribbon-bordered pockets of her apron . . . a vision to warm the coldest heart and bless and cheer the saddest." The author had the real Laura of his childhood in his mind when he wrote that, though the story itself bears no resemblance to her life.

They were never really sweethearts, those two. They were good friends and comrades. Sometimes he brought her magazines — exchanges from the printing-office— Godey's and others. These were a treat, for such things were scarce enough. He cared little for reading, himself, beyond a few exciting tales, though the putting into type of a good deal of miscellaneous matter had beyond doubt developed in him a taste for general knowledge. It needed only to be awakened.

XVI

THE TURNING-POINT

THERE came into his life just at this period one of those seemingly trifling incidents which, viewed in retrospect, assume pivotal proportions. He was on his way from the office to his home one afternoon when he saw flying along the pavement a square of paper, a leaf from a book. At an earlier time he would not have bothered with it at all, but any printed page had acquired a professional interest for him now. He caught the flying scrap and examined it. It was a leaf from some history of Joan of Arc. The "maid" was described in the cage at Rouen, in the fortress, and the two ruffian English soldiers had stolen her clothes. There was a brief description and a good deal of dialogue—her reproaches and their ribald replies.

He had never heard of the subject before. He had never read any history. When he wanted to know any fact he asked Henry, who read everything obtainable. Now, however, there arose within him a deep compassion for the gentle Maid of Orleans, a burning resentment toward her captors, a powerful and indestructible interest in her sad history. It was an interest that would grow steadily for more than half a lifetime and culminate at last in that crowning work, the *Recollections*, the loveliest story ever told of the martyred girl.

The incident meant even more than that: it meant the awakening of his interest in all history—the world's story in its many phases—a passion which became the largest

feature of his intellectual life and remained with him until his very last day on earth. From the moment when that fluttering leaf was blown into his hands his career as one of the world's mentally elect was assured. It gave him his cue—the first word of a part in the human drama. It crystallized suddenly within him sympathy with the oppressed, rebellion against tyranny and treachery, scorn for the divine rights of kings. A few months before he died he wrote a paper on "The Turning-point of My Life." For some reason he did not mention this incident. Yet if there *was* a turning-point in his life, he reached it that bleak afternoon on the streets of Hannibal when a stray leaf from another life was blown into his hands.

He read hungrily now everything he could find relating to the French wars, and to Joan in particular. He acquired an appetite for history in general, the record of any nation or period; he seemed likely to become a student. Presently he began to feel the need of languages, French and German. There was no opportunity to acquire French, that he could discover, but there was a German shoemaker in Hannibal who agreed to teach his native tongue. Sam Clemens got a friend—very likely it was John Briggs—to form a class with him, and together they arranged for lessons. The shoemaker had little or no English. They had no German. It would seem, however, that their teacher had some sort of a "word-book," and when they assembled in his little cubby-hole of a retreat he began reading aloud from it this puzzling sentence:

"De hain eet flee whoop in de hayer."

"Dere!" he said, triumphantly; "you know dose vord?"

The students looked at each other helplessly.

The teacher repeated the sentence, and again they were helpless when he asked if they recognized it.

Then in despair he showed them the book. It was an English primer, and the sentence was:

"The hen, it flies up in the air."

They explained to him gently that it was German they wished to learn, not English—not under the circumstances. Later, Sam made an attempt at Latin, and got a book for that purpose, but gave it up, saying:

"No, that language is not for me. I'll do well enough to learn English." A boy who took it up with him became a Latin scholar.

His prejudice against oppression he put into practice. Boys who were being imposed upon found in him a ready protector. Sometimes, watching a game of marbles or tops, he would remark in his slow, impressive way:

"You mustn't cheat that boy." And the cheating stopped. When it didn't, there was a combat, with consequences.

XVII

THE HANNIBAL "JOURNAL"

ORION returned from St. Louis. He felt that he was needed in Hannibal and, while wages there were lower, his expenses at home were slight; there was more real return for the family fund. His sister Pamela was teaching a class in Hannibal at this time. Orion was surprised when his mother and sister greeted him with kisses and tears. Any outward display of affection was new to him.

The family had moved back across the street by this time. With Sam supporting himself, the earnings of Orion and Pamela provided at least a semblance of comfort. But Orion was not satisfied. Then, as always, he had a variety of vague ambitions. Oratory appealed to him, and he delivered a temperance lecture with an accompaniment of music, supplied chiefly by Pamela. He aspired to the study of law, a recurring inclination throughout his career. He also thought of the ministry, an ambition which Sam shared with him for a time. Every mischievous boy has it, sooner or later, though not all for the same reasons.

"It was the most earnest ambition I ever had," Mark Twain once remarked, thoughtfully. "Not that I ever really wanted to be a preacher, but because it never occurred to me that a preacher could be damned. It looked like a safe job."

A periodical ambition of Orion's was to own and conduct a paper in Hannibal. He felt that in such a position he might become a power in Western journalism. Once his

father had considered buying the Hannibal *Journal* to give Orion a chance, and possibly to further his own political ambitions. Now Orion considered it for himself. The paper was for sale under a mortgage, and he was enabled to borrow the $500 which would secure ownership. Sam's two years at Ament's were now complete, and Orion induced him to take employment on the *Journal.* Henry at eleven was taken out of school to learn typesetting.

Orion was a gentle, accommodating soul, but he lacked force and independence.

"I followed all the advice I received," he says in his record. "If two or more persons conflicted with each other, I adopted the views of the last."

He started full of enthusiasm. He worked like a slave to save help: wrote his own editorials, and made his literary selections at night. The others worked too. Orion gave them hard tasks and long hours. He had the feeling that the paper meant fortune or failure to them all; that all must labor without stint. In his usual self-accusing way he wrote afterward:

> I was tyrannical and unjust to Sam. He was as swift and as clean as a good journeyman. I gave him tasks, and if he got through well I begrudged him the time and made him work more. He set a clean proof, and Henry a very dirty one. The correcting was left to be done in the form the day before publication. Once we were kept late, and Sam complained with tears of bitterness that he was held till midnight on Henry's dirty proofs.

Orion did not realize any injustice at the time. The game was too desperate to be played tenderly. His first editorials were so brilliant that it was not believed he could have written them. The paper throughout was excellent, and seemed on the high road to success. But the pace was too hard to maintain. Overwork brought

weariness, and Orion's enthusiasm, never a very stable quantity, grew feeble. He became still more exacting.

It is not to be supposed that Sam Clemens had given up all amusements to become merely a toiling drudge or had conquered in any large degree his natural taste for amusement. He had become more studious; but after the long, hard days in the office it was not to be expected that a boy of fifteen would employ the evening—at least not every evening—in reading beneficial books. The river was always near at hand—for swimming in the summer and skating in the winter—and once even at this late period it came near claiming a heavy tribute. That was one winter's night when with another boy he had skated until nearly midnight. They were about in the middle of the river when they heard a terrific and grinding noise near the shore. They knew what it was. The ice was breaking up, and they set out for home forthwith. It was moonlight, and they could tell the ice from the water, which was a good thing, for there were wide cracks toward the shore, and they had to wait for these to close. They were an hour making the trip, and just before they reached the bank they came to a broad space of water. The ice was lifting and falling and crunching all around them. They waited as long as they dared and decided to leap from cake to cake. Sam made the crossing without accident, but his companion slipped in when a few feet from shore. He was a good swimmer and landed safely, but the bath probably cost him his hearing. He was taken very ill. One disease followed another, ending with scarlet fever and deafness.

There was also entertainment in the office itself. A country boy named Jim Wolfe had come to learn the trade —a green, good-natured, bashful boy. In every trade tricks are played on the new apprentice, and Sam felt that it was his turn to play them. With John Briggs to help him, tortures for Jim Wolfe were invented and applied.

They taught him to paddle a canoe, and upset him. They took him sniping at night and left him "holding the bag" in the old traditional fashion, while they slipped off home and went to bed.

But Jim Wolfe's masterpiece of entertainment was one which he undertook on his own account. Pamela was having a candy-pull down-stairs one night—a grown-up candy-pull to which the boys were not expected. Jim would not have gone, anyway, for he was bashful beyond belief, and always dumb, and even pale with fear, in the presence of pretty Pamela Clemens. Up in their room the boys could hear the merriment from below and could look out in the moonlight on the snowy sloping roof that began just beneath their window. Down at the eaves was the small arbor, green in summer, but covered now with dead vines and snow. They could hear the candy-makers come out, now and then, doubtless setting out pans of candy to cool. By and by the whole party seemed to come out into the little arbor, to try the candy, perhaps· the joking and laughter came plainly to the boys up-stairs. About this time there appeared on the roof from somewhere two disreputable cats, who set up a most disturbing duel of charge and recrimination. Jim detested the noise, and perhaps was gallant enough to think it would disturb the party. He had nothing to throw at them, but he said:

"For two cents I'd get out there and knock their heads off."

"You wouldn't dare to do it," Sam said, purringly.

This was wormwood to Jim. He was really a brave spirit.

"I would too," he said, "and I will if you say that again."

"Why, Jim, of course you wouldn't dare to go out there. You might catch cold."

"You wait and see," said Jim Wolfe.

He grabbed a pair of yarn stockings for his feet, raised the window, and crept out on the snowy roof. There was

a crust of ice on the snow, but Jim jabbed his heels through it and stood up in the moonlight, his legs bare, his single garment flapping gently in the light winter breeze. Then he started slowly toward the cats, sinking his heels in the snow each time for a footing, a piece of lath in his hand. The cats were on the corner of the roof above the arbor, and Jim cautiously worked his way in that direction. The roof was not very steep. He was doing well enough until he came to a place where the snow had melted until it was nearly solid ice. He was so intent on the cats that he did not notice this, and when he struck his heel down to break the crust nothing yielded. A second later Jim's feet had shot out from under him, and he vaulted like an avalanche down the icy roof out on the little vine-clad arbor, and went crashing through among those candy-pullers, gathered there with their pans of cooling taffy. There were wild shrieks and a general flight. Neither Jim nor Sam ever knew how he got back to their room, but Jim was overcome with the enormity of his offense, while Sam was in an agony of laughter.

"You did it splendidly, Jim," he drawled, when he could speak. "Nobody could have done it better; and did you see how those cats got out of there? I never had any idea when you started that you meant to do it *that* way. And it was such a surprise to the folks down-stairs. How did you ever think of it?"

It was a fearful ordeal for a boy like Jim Wolfe, but he stuck to his place in spite of what he must have suffered. The boys made him one of them soon after that. His initiation was thought to be complete.

An account of Jim Wolfe and the cats was the first original story Mark Twain ever told. He told it next day, which was Sunday, to Jimmy McDaniel, the baker's son, as they sat looking out over the river, eating gingerbread. His hearer laughed immoderately, and the story-teller was proud and happy in his success.

XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF A LITERARY LIFE

ORION'S paper continued to go downhill. Following some random counsel, he changed the name of it and advanced the price—two blunders. Then he was compelled to reduce the subscription, also the advertising rates. He was obliged to adopt a descending scale of charges and expenditures to keep pace with his declining circulation—a fatal sign. A publisher must lead his subscription list, not follow it.

"I was walking backward," he said, "not seeing where I stepped."

In desperation he broke away and made a trip to Tennessee to see if something could not be realized on the land, leaving his brother Sam in charge of the office. It was a journey without financial results; yet it bore fruit, for it marked the beginning of Mark Twain's literary career.

Sam, in his brother's absence, concluded to edit the paper in a way that would liven up the circulation. He had never done any writing—not for print—but he had the courage of his inclinations. His local items were of a kind known as "spicy"; his personals brought prompt demand for satisfaction. The editor of a rival paper had been in love, and was said to have gone to the river one night to drown himself. Sam gave a picturesque account of this, with all the names connected with the affair. Then he took a couple of big wooden block letters, turned them upside down, and engraved illustrations for it, showing the

victim wading out into the river with a stick to test the depth of the water. When this issue of the paper came out the demand for it was very large. The press had to be kept running steadily to supply copies. The satirized editor at first swore that he would thrash the whole *Journal* office, then he left town and did not come back any more. The embryo Mark Twain also wrote a poem. It was addressed "To Mary in Hannibal," but the title was too long to be set in one column, so he left out all the letters in Hannibal, except the first and the last, and supplied their place with a dash, with a startling result. Such were the early flickerings of a smoldering genius. Orion returned, remonstrated, and apologized. He reduced Sam to the ranks. In later years he saw his mistake.

"I could have distanced all competitors even then," he said, "if I had recognized Sam's ability and let him go ahead, merely keeping him from offending worthy persons."

Sam was subdued, but not done for. He never would be, now. He had got his first taste of print, and he liked it. He promptly wrote two anecdotes which he thought humorous and sent them to the Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post*. They were accepted—without payment, of course, in those days; and when the papers containing them appeared he felt suddenly lifted to a lofty plane of literature. This was in 1851.

"Seeing them in print was a joy which rather exceeded anything in that line I have ever experienced since," he said, nearly sixty years later.

Yet he did not feel inspired to write anything further for the *Post*. Twice during the next two years he contributed to the *Journal;* once something about Jim Wolfe, though it was not the story of the cats, and another burlesque on a rival editor whom he pictured as hunting snipe with a cannon, the explosion of which

was said to have blown the snipe out of the country. No contributions of this time have been preserved. High prices have been offered for copies of the Hannibal *Journal* containing them, but without success. The *Post* sketches were unsigned and have not been identified. It is likely they were trivial enough. His earliest work showed no special individuality or merit, being mainly crude and imitative, as the work of a boy—even a precocious boy—is likely to be. He was not especially precocious—not in literature. His literary career would halt and hesitate and trifle along for many years yet, gathering impetus and equipment for the fuller, statelier swing which would bring a greater joy to the world at large, even if not to himself, than that first, far-off triumph.[1]

Those were hard financial days. Orion could pay nothing on his mortgage—barely the interest. He had promised Sam three dollars and a half a week, but he could do no more than supply him with board and clothes —"poor, shabby clothes," he says in his record.

"My mother and sister did the housekeeping. My mother was cook. She used the provisions I supplied her. We therefore had a regular diet of bacon, butter, bread, and coffee."

Mrs. Clemens again took a few boarders; Pamela, who had given up teaching for a time, organized another music class. Orion became despondent. One night a cow got into the office, upset a type-case, and ate up two composition rollers. Orion felt that fate was dealing with a heavy hand. Another disaster quickly followed. Fire broke out in the office, and the loss was considerable. An insurance company paid one hundred and fifty dollars. With it Orion replaced such articles as were absolutely needed for work, and removed his plant into the

[1] In Mark Twain's sketch "My First Literary Venture" he has set down with characteristic embroideries some account of this early authorship.

front room of the Clemens dwelling. He raised the one-story part of the building to give them an added room up-stairs; and there for another two years, by hard work and pinching economies, the dying paper managed to drag along. It was the fire that furnished Sam Clemens with his Jim Wolfe sketch. In it he stated that Jim in his excitement had carried the office broom half a mile and had then come back after the wash-pan.

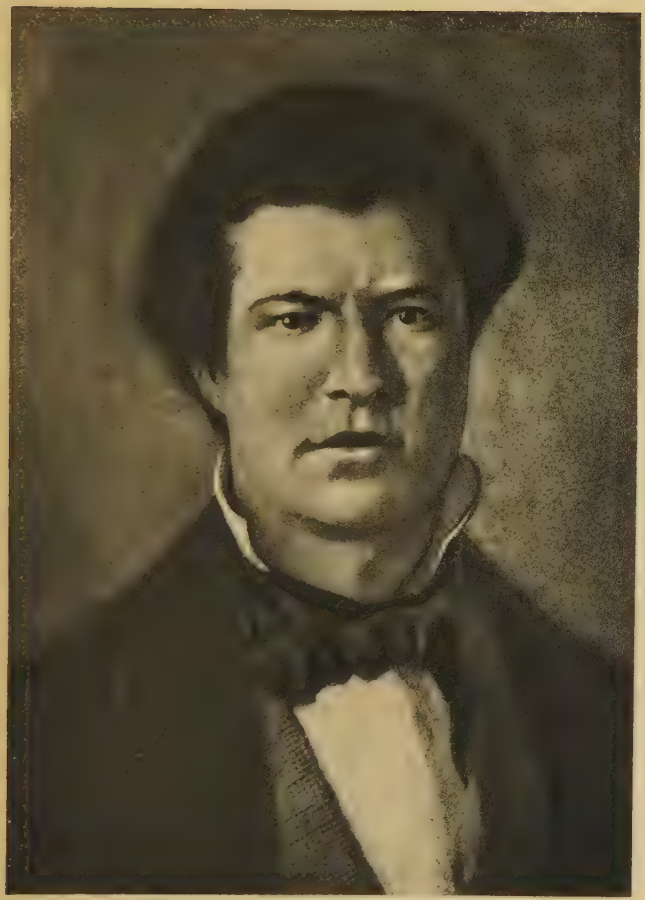
In the mean time Pamela Clemens married. Her husband was a well-to-do merchant, William A. Moffett, formerly of Hannibal, but then of St. Louis, where he had provided her with the comforts of a substantial home.

Orion tried the experiment of a serial story. He wrote to a number of well-known authors in the East, but was unable to find one who would supply a serial for the price he was willing to pay. Finally he obtained a translation of a French novel for the sum offered, which was five dollars. It did not save the sinking ship, however. He made the experiment of a tri-weekly, without success. He noticed that even his mother no longer read his editorials, but turned to the general news. This was a final blow.

"I sat down in the dark," he says, "the moon glinting in at the open door. I sat with one leg over the chair and let my mind float."

He had received an offer of five hundred dollars for his office—the amount of the mortgage—and in his moonlight reverie he decided to dispose of it on those terms. This was in 1853.

His brother Samuel was no longer with him. Several months before, in June, Sam decided he would go out into the world. He was in his eighteenth year now, a good workman, faithful and industrious, but he had grown restless in unrewarded service. Beyond his mastery of the trade he had little to show for six years of hard labor. Once when he had asked Orion for a few dollars to buy



a second-hand gun, Orion, exasperated by desperate circumstances, fell into a passion and rated him for thinking of such extravagance. Soon afterward Sam confided to his mother that he was going away; that he believed Orion hated him; that there was no longer a place for him at home. He said he would go to St. Louis, where Pamela was. There would be work for him in St. Louis, and he could send money home. His intention was to go farther than St. Louis, but he dared not tell her. His mother put together sadly enough the few belongings of what she regarded as her one wayward boy; then she held up a little Testament

"I want you to take hold of the other end of this, Sam," she said, "and make me a promise."

If one might have a true picture of that scene: the slim, wiry woman of forty-nine, her figure as straight as her deportment, gray-eyed, tender, and resolute, facing the fair-cheeked, auburn-haired youth of seventeen, his eyes as piercing and unwavering as her own. Mother and son, they were of the same metal and the same mold.

"I want you to repeat after me, Sam, these words," Jane Clemens said. 'I do solemnly swear that I will not throw a card or drink a drop of liquor while I am gone.'"

He repeated the oath after her, and she kissed him.

"*Remember* that, Sam, and write to us," she said.

"And so," Orion records, "he went wandering in search of that comfort and that advancement and those rewards of industry which he had failed to find where I was—gloomy, taciturn, and selfish. I not only missed his labor; we all missed his bounding activity and merriment."

XIX

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FRANKLIN

HE went to St. Louis by the night boat, visited his sister Pamela, and found a job in the composing-room of the *Evening News*. He remained on the paper only long enough to earn money with which to see the world. The "world" was New York City, where the Crystal Palace Fair was then going on. The railway had been completed by this time, but he had not traveled on it. It had not many comforts; several days and nights were required for the New York trip; yet it was a wonderful and beautiful experience. He felt that even Pet McMurry could hardly have done anything to surpass it. He arrived in New York with two or three dollars in his pocket and a ten-dollar bill concealed in the lining of his coat.

New York was a great and amazing city. It almost frightened him. It covered the entire lower end of Manhattan Island; visionary citizens boasted that one day it would cover it all. The World's Fair building, the Crystal Palace, stood a good way out. It was where Bryant Park is now, on Forty-second Street and Sixth Avenue. Young Clemens classed it as one of the wonders of the world and wrote lavishly of its marvels. A portion of a letter to his sister Pamela has been preserved and is given here not only for what it contains, but as the earliest existing specimen of his composition. The fragment concludes what was doubtless an exhaustive description.

From the gallery (second floor) you have a glorious sight—the flags of the different countries represented, the lofty dome, glittering jewelry, gaudy tapestry, etc., with the busy crowd

passing to and fro—'tis a perfect fairy palace—beautiful beyond description.

The machinery department is on the main floor, but I cannot enumerate any of it on account of the lateness of the hour (past 1 o'clock). It would take more than a week to examine everything on exhibition; and I was only in a little over two hours to-night. I only glanced at about one-third of the articles; and, having a poor memory, I have enumerated scarcely any of even the principal objects. The visitors to the Palace average 6,000 daily—double the population of Hannibal. The price of admission being 50 cents, they take in about $3,000.

The Latting Observatory (height about 280 feet) is near the Palace—from it you can obtain a grand view of the city and the country around. The Croton Aqueduct, to supply the city with water, is the greatest wonder yet. Immense sewers are laid across the bed of the Hudson River, and pass through the country to Westchester County, where a whole river is turned from its course and brought to New York. From the reservoir in the city to the Westchester County reservoir the distance is thirty-eight miles and, if necessary, they could easily supply every family in New York with one hundred barrels of water per day!

I am very sorry to learn that Henry has been sick. He ought to go to the country and take exercise, for he is not half so healthy as Ma thinks he is. If he had my walking to do, he would be another boy entirely. Four times every day I walk a little over a mile; and working hard all day and walking four miles is exercise. I am used to it now, though, and it is no trouble. Where is it Orion's going to? Tell Ma my promises are faithfully kept; and if I have my health I will take her to Ky. in the spring—I shall save money for this. Tell Jim (Wolfe) and all the rest of them to write, and give me all the news. . . .

(It has just struck 2 A.M., and I always get up at 6, and am at work at 7.) You ask where I spend my evenings. Where would you suppose, with a free printer's library containing more than 4,000 volumes within a quarter of a mile of me, and nobody at home to talk to? Write soon.

Truly your brother, SAM.

P.S.—I have written this by a light so dim that you nor Ma could not read by it. Write, and let me know how Henry is.

It is a good letter; it is direct and clear in its descriptive quality, and it gives us a scale of things. Double the population of Hannibal visited the Crystal Palace in one day! and the water to supply the city came a distance of thirty-eight miles! Doubtless these were amazing statistics.

Then there was the interest in family affairs—always strong—his concern for Henry, whom he loved tenderly; his memory of the promise to his mother; his understanding of her craving to visit her old home. He did not write to her direct, for the reason that Orion's plans were then uncertain, and it was not unlikely that he had already found a new location. From this letter, too, we learn that the boy who detested school was reveling in a library of four thousand books—more than he had ever seen together before. We have somehow the feeling that he had all at once stepped from boyhood to manhood, and that the separation was marked by a very definite line.

The work he had secured was in Cliff Street in the printing establishment of John A. Gray & Green, who agreed to pay him four dollars a week, and did pay that amount in wildcat money, which saved them about twenty-five per cent. of the sum. He lodged at a mechanics' boarding-house in Duane Street, and when he had paid his board and washing he sometimes had as much as fifty cents to lay away.

He did not like the board. He had been accustomed to the Southern mode of cooking, and wrote home complaining that New-Yorkers did not have "hot-bread" or biscuits, but ate "light-bread," which they allowed to get stale, seeming to prefer it in that way. On the whole, there was not much inducement to remain in New York after he had satisfied himself with its wonders. He lingered, however, through the hot months of 1853, and found it not easy to go. In October he wrote to Pamela, suggesting plans for Orion; also for Henry and Jim Wolfe,

whom he seems never to have overlooked. Among other things he says:

I have not written to any of the family for some time, from the fact, firstly, that I didn't know where they were, and, secondly, because I have been fooling myself with the idea that I was going to leave New York every day for the last two weeks. I have taken a liking to the abominable place, and every time I get ready to leave I put it off a day or so, from some unaccountable cause. I think I shall get off Tuesday, though.

Edwin Forrest has been playing for the last sixteen days at the Broadway Theater, but I never went to see him till last night. The play was the "Gladiator." I did not like parts of it much, but other portions were really splendid. In the latter part of the last act, where the "Gladiator" (Forrest) dies at his brother's feet (in all the fierce pleasure of gratified revenge), the man's whole soul seems absorbed in the part he is playing; and it is really startling to see him. I am sorry I did not see him play "Damon and Pythias"—the former character being the greatest. He appears in Philadelphia on Monday night.

I have not received a letter from home lately, but got a "Journal" the other day, in which I see the office has been sold. . . .

If my letters do not come often, you need not bother yourself about me; for if you have a brother nearly eighteen years of age who is not able to take care of himself a few miles from home, such a brother is not worth one's thoughts; and if I don't manage to take care of No. 1, be assured you will never know it. I am not afraid, however; I shall ask favors of no one and endeavor to be (and shall be) as "independent as a wood-sawyer's clerk." . . .

Passage to Albany (160 miles) on the finest steamers that ply the Hudson is now 25 cents—cheap enough, but is generally cheaper than that in the summer.

"I have been fooling myself with the idea that I was going to leave New York" is distinctly a Mark Twain phrase. He might have said that fifty years later.

He did go to Philadelphia presently and found work "subbing" on a daily paper, the *Inquirer*. He was a fairly

swift compositor. He could set ten thousand ems a day, and he received pay according to the amount of work done. Days or evenings when there was no vacant place for him to fill he visited historic sites, the art-galleries, and the libraries. He was still acquiring education, you see. Sometimes at night when he returned to his boarding-house his room-mate, an Englishman named Sumner, grilled a herring, and this was regarded as a feast. He tried his hand at writing in Philadelphia, though this time without success. For some reason he did not again attempt to get into the *Post*, but offered his contributions to the Philadelphia *Ledger*—mainly poetry of an obituary kind. Perhaps it was burlesque; he never confessed that, but it seems unlikely that any other obituary poetry would have failed of print.

"My efforts were not received with approval," was all he ever said of it afterward.

There were two or three characters in the *Inquirer* office whom he did not forget. One of these was an old compositor who had "held a case" in that office for many years. His name was Frog, and sometimes when he went away the "office devils" would hang a line over his case, with a hook on it baited with a piece of red flannel. They never got tired of this joke, and Frog was always able to get as mad over it as he had been in the beginning. Another old fellow there furnished amusement. He owned a house in the distant part of the city and had an abnormal fear of fire. Now and then, when everything was quiet except the clicking of the types, some one would step to the window and say with a concerned air:

"Doesn't that smoke [or that light, if it was evening] seem to be in the northwestern part of the city?" or "There go the fire-bells again!" and away the old man would tramp up to the roof to investigate. It was not the most considerate sport, and it is to be feared that Sam Clemens had his share in it.

He found that he liked Philadelphia. He could save a little money there, for one thing, and now and then sent something to his mother — small amounts, but welcome and gratifying, no doubt. In a letter to Orion—whom he seems to have forgiven with absence—written October 26th, he incloses a gold dollar to buy her a handkerchief, and "to serve as a specimen of the kind of stuff we are paid with in Philadelphia." Further along he adds:

> Unlike New York, I like this Philadelphia amazingly, and the people in it. There is only one thing that gets my "dander" up—and that is the hands are always encouraging me: telling me "it's no use to get discouraged—no use to be downhearted, for there is more work here than you can do!" "Downhearted," the devil! I have not had a particle of such a feeling since I left Hannibal, more than four months ago. I fancy they'll have to wait some time till they see me downhearted or afraid of starving while I have strength to work and am in a city of 400,000 inhabitants. When I was in Hannibal, before I had scarcely stepped out of the town limits, nothing could have convinced me that I would starve as soon as I got a little way from home.

He mentions the grave of Franklin in Christ Churchyard with its inscription "Benjamin and Deborah Franklin," and one is sharply reminded of the similarity between the early careers of Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Clemens. Each learned the printer's trade; each worked in his brother's printing-office and wrote for the paper; each left quietly and went to New York, and from New York to Philadelphia, as a journeyman printer; each in due season became a world figure, many-sided, human, and of incredible popularity.

The foregoing letter ends with a long description of a trip made on the Fairmount stage. It is a good, vivid description—impressions of a fresh, sensitive mind, set down with little effort at fine writing; a letter to convey

literal rather than literary enjoyment. The Wire Bridge, Fairmount Park and Reservoir, new buildings—all these passed in review. A fine residence about completed impressed him:

> It was built entirely of great blocks of red granite. The pillars in front were all finished but one. These pillars were beautiful, ornamental fluted columns, considerably larger than a hogshead at the base, and about as high as Clapinger's second-story front windows. . . . To see some of them finished and standing, and then the huge blocks lying about, looks so massy, and carries one, in imagination, to the ruined piles of ancient Babylon. I despise the infernal bogus brick columns plastered over with mortar. Marble is the cheapest building-stone about Philadelphia.

There is a flavor of the *Innocents* about it; then a little further along:

> I saw small steamboats, with their signs up—"For Wissahickon and Manayunk—25 cents." Geo. Lippard, in his *Legends of Washington and his Generals*, has rendered the Wissahickon sacred in my eyes, and I shall make that trip, as well as one to Germantown, soon. . . .
>
> There is one fine custom observed in Phila. A gentleman is always expected to hand up a lady's money for her. Yesterday I sat in the front end of the 'bus, directly under the driver's box—a lady sat opposite me. She handed me her money, which was right. But, Lord! a St. Louis lady would think herself ruined if she should be so familiar with a stranger. In St. Louis a man will sit in the front end of the stage, and see a lady stagger from the far end to pay her fare.

There are two more letters from Philadelphia: one of November 28th, to Orion, who by this time had bought a paper in Muscatine, Iowa, and located the family there; and one to Pamela dated December 5th. Evidently Orion had realized that his brother might be of value as a contributor, for the latter says:

I will try to write for the paper occasionally, but I fear my letters will be very uninteresting, for this incessant night work dulls one's ideas amazingly. . . . I believe I am the only person in the *Inquirer* office that does not drink. One young fellow makes $18 for a few weeks, and gets on a grand "bender" and spends every cent of it.

How do you like "free soil"?—I would like amazingly to see a good old-fashioned negro. My love to all.

Truly your brother, SAM.

In the letter to Pamela he is clearly homesick.

"I only want to return to avoid night work, which is injuring my eyes," is the excuse, but in the next sentence he complains of the scarcity of letters from home and those "not written as they should be." "One only has to leave home to learn how to write interesting letters to an absent friend," he says, and in conclusion, "I don't like our present prospect for cold weather at all."

He had been gone half a year, and the first attack of home-longing, for a boy of his age, was due. The novelty of things had worn off; it was coming on winter; changes had taken place among his home people and friends; the life he had known best and longest was going on and he had no part in it. Leaning over his case, he sometimes hummed:

"An exile from home, splendor dazzles in vain."

He weathered the attack and stuck it out for more than half a year longer. In January, when the days were dark and he grew depressed, he made a trip to Washington to see the sights of the capital. His stay was comparatively brief, and he did not work there. He returned to Philadelphia, working for a time on the *Ledger* and *North American*. Finally he went back to New York. There are no letters of this period. His second experience in New York appears not to have been recorded, and in

later years was only vaguely remembered. It was late in the summer of 1854 when he finally set out on his return to the West. His *Wanderjahr* had lasted nearly fifteen months.

He went directly to St. Louis, sitting up three days and nights in a smoking-car to make the journey. He was worn out when he arrived, but stopped there only a few hours to see Pamela. It was his mother he was anxious for. He took the *Keokuk Packet* that night, and, flinging himself on his berth, slept the clock three times around, scarcely rousing or turning over, only waking at last at Muscatine. For a long time that missing day confused his calculations.

When he reached Orion's house the family sat at breakfast. He came in carrying a gun. They had not been expecting him, and there was a general outcry, and a rush in his direction. He warded them off, holding the butt of the gun in front of him.

"You wouldn't let me buy a gun," he said, "so I bought one myself, and I am going to use it, now, in self-defense."

"You, Sam! You, Sam!" cried Jane Clemens. "Behave yourself," for she was wary of a gun.

Then he had had his joke and gave himself into his mother's arms.

XX

KEOKUK DAYS

ORION wished his brother to remain with him in the Muscatine office, but the young man declared he must go to St. Louis and earn some money before he would be able to afford that luxury. He returned to his place on the St. Louis *Evening News*, where he remained until late winter or early spring of the following year.

He lived at this time with a Pavey family, probably one of the Hannibal Paveys, rooming with a youth named Frank E. Burrough, a journeyman chairmaker with a taste for Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, and Disraeli. Burrough had really a fine literary appreciation for his years, and the boys were comrades and close friends. Twenty-two years later Mark Twain exchanged with Burrough some impressions of himself at that earlier time. Clemens wrote:

> MY DEAR BURROUGH,—As you describe me I can picture myself as I was 22 years ago. The portrait is correct. You think I have grown some; upon my word there was room for it. You have described a callow fool, a self-sufficient ass, a mere human tumble-bug, stern in air, heaving at his bit of dung, imagining that he is remodeling the world and is entirely capable of doing it right. . . . That is what I was at 19–20.

Orion Clemens in the meantime had married and removed to Keokuk. He had married during a visit to that city, in the casual, impulsive way so characteristic of him, and the fact that he had acquired a wife in the operation seemed at first to have escaped his inner consciousness. He tells it himself; he says:

At sunrise on the next morning after the wedding we left in a stage for Muscatine. We halted for dinner at Burlington. After despatching that meal we stood on the pavement when the stage drove up, ready for departure. I climbed in, gathered the buffalo robe around me, and leaned back unconscious that I had anything further to do. A gentleman standing on the pavement said to my wife, "Miss, do you go by this stage?" I said, "Oh, I forgot!" and sprang out and helped her in. A wife was a new kind of possession to which I had not yet become accustomed; I had forgotten her.

Orion's wife had been Mary Stotts; her mother a friend of Jane Clemens's girlhood. She proved a faithful helpmate to Orion; but in those early days of marriage she may have found life with him rather trying, and it was her homesickness that brought them to Keokuk. Brother Sam came up from St. Louis, by and by, to visit them, and Orion offered him five dollars a week and board to remain. He accepted. The office at this time, or soon after, was located on the third floor of 52 Main Street, in the building at present occupied by the Paterson Shoe Company. Henry Clemens, now seventeen, was also in Orion's employ, and a lad by the name of Dick Hingham. Henry and Sam slept in the office, and Dick came in for social evenings. Also a young man named Edward Brownell, who clerked in the book-store on the ground floor.

These were likely to be lively evenings. A music dealer and teacher, Professor Isbell, occupied the floor just below, and did not care for their diversions. He objected, but hardly in the right way. Had he gone to Samuel Clemens gently, he undoubtedly would have found him willing to make any concessions. Instead, he assailed him roughly, and the next evening the boys set up a lot of empty wine-bottles, which they had found in a barrel in a closet, and, with stones for balls, played tenpins on the office floor. This was Dick and Sam; Henry declined to join the game. Isbell rushed up-stairs

and battered on the door, but they paid no attention. Next morning he waited for the young men and denounced them wildly. They merely ignored him, and that night organized a military company, made up of themselves and a new German apprentice-boy, and drilled up and down over the singing-class. Dick Hingham led these military manœuvers. He was a girlish sort of a fellow, but he had a natural taste for soldiering. The others used to laugh at him. They called him a disguised girl, and declared he would run if a gun were really pointed in his direction. They were mistaken; seven years later Dick died at Fort Donelson with a bullet in his forehead: this, by the way.

Isbell now adopted new tactics. He came up very pleasantly and said:

"I like your military practice better than your tenpin exercise, but on the whole it seems to disturb the young ladies. You see how it is yourself. You couldn't possibly teach music with a company of raw recruits drilling overhead—now, could you? Won't you please stop it? It bothers my pupils."

Sam Clemens regarded him with mild surprise.

"Does it?" he said, very deliberately. "Why didn't you mention it before? To be sure we don't want to disturb the young ladies."

They gave up the horse-play, and not only stopped the disturbance, but joined one of the singing-classes. Samuel Clemens had a pretty good voice in those days and could drum fairly well on a piano and guitar. He did not become a brilliant musician, but he was easily the most popular member of the singing-class.

They liked his frank nature, his jokes, and his humor; his slow, quaint fashion of speech. The young ladies called him openly and fondly a "fool"—a term of endearment, as they applied it—meaning only that he kept them in a more or less constant state of wonder and merri-

ment; and indeed it would have been hard for them to say whether he was really light-minded and frivolous or the wisest of them all. He was twenty now and at the age for love-making; yet he remained, as in Hannibal, a beau rather than a suitor, good friend and comrade to all, wooer of none. Ella Creel, a cousin on the Lampton side, a great belle; also Ella Patterson (related through Orion's wife and generally known as "Ick"), and Belle Stotts were perhaps his favorite companions, but there were many more. He was always ready to stop and be merry with them, full of his pranks and pleasantries; though they noticed that he quite often carried a book under his arm—a history, a volume of Dickens, or the tales of Edgar Allan Poe.

He read at odd moments; at night voluminously—until very late, sometimes. Already in that early day it was his habit to smoke in bed, and he had made him an Oriental pipe of the hubble-bubble variety, because it would hold more and was more comfortable than the regular short pipe of daytime use.

But it had its disadvantages. Sometimes it would go out, and that would mean sitting up and reaching for a match and leaning over to light the bowl which stood on the floor. Young Brownell from below was passing upstairs to his room on the fourth floor one night when he heard Sam Clemens call. The two were great chums by this time, and Brownell poked his head in at the door.

"What will you have, Sam?" he asked.

"Come in, Ed; Henry's asleep, and I am in trouble. I want somebody to light my pipe."

"Why don't you get up and light it yourself?" Brownell asked.

"I would, only I knew you'd be along in a few minutes and would do it for me."

Brownell scratched the necessary match, stooped down and applied it.

"What are you reading, Sam?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing much—a so-called funny book—one of these days I'll write a funnier book than that, myself."

Brownell laughed.

"No, you won't, Sam," he said. "You are too lazy ever to write a book."

A good many years later when the name "Mark Twain" had begun to stand for American humor the owner of it gave his "Sandwich Island" lecture in Keokuk. Speaking of the unreliability of the islanders, he said: "The king is, I believe, one of the greatest liars on the face of the earth, except one; and I am very sorry to locate that one right here in the city of Keokuk, in the person of Ed Brownell.

The Keokuk episode in Mark Twain's life was neither very long nor very actively important. It extended over a period of less than two years—two vital years, no doubt, if all the bearings could be known—but they were not years of startling occurrence.

Yet he made at least one beginning there: at a printers' banquet he delivered his first after-dinner speech; a hilarious speech—its humor of a primitive kind. Whatever its shortcomings, it delighted his audience, and raised him many points in the public regard. He had entered a field of entertainment in which he would one day have no rival. They impressed him into a debating society after that, and there was generally a stir of attention when Sam Clemens was about to take the floor.

Orion Clemens records how his brother undertook to teach the German apprentice music.

"There was an old guitar in the office and Sam taught Fritz a song beginning:

> Grasshopper sitting on a sweet-potato vine,
> Turkey came along and yanked him from behind."

The main point in the lesson was in giving to the word "yanked" the proper expression and emphasis, accom-

panied by a sweep of the fingers across the strings. With serious face and deep earnestness Fritz in his broken English would attempt these lines, while his teacher would bend over and hold his sides with laughter at each ridiculous effort. Without intending it, Fritz had his revenge. One day his tormentor's hand was caught in the press when the German boy was turning the wheel. Sam called to him to stop, but the boy's mind was slow to grasp the situation. The hand was badly wounded, though no bones were broken. In due time it recovered its power and dexterity, but the trace of the scars remained.

Orion's printing-office was not a prosperous one; he had not the gift of prosperity in any form. When he found it difficult to pay his brother's wages, he took him into partnership, which meant that Sam got no wages at all, barely a living, for the office could not keep its head above water.

The junior partner was not disturbed, however. He cared little for money in those days, beyond his actual needs, and these were modest enough. His mother, now with Pamela, was amply provided for. Orion himself tells how his business dwindled away. He printed a Keokuk directory, but it did not pay largely. He was always too eager for the work; too low in his bid for it. Samuel Clemens in this directory is set down as "an antiquarian"—a joke, of course, though the point of it is now lost.

Only two of his Keokuk letters have been preserved. The first indicates the general disorder of the office and a growing dissatisfaction. It is addressed to his mother and sister and bears date of June 10, 1856.

I don't like to work at too many things at once. They take Henry and Dick away from me, too. Before we commenced the Directory, I could tell before breakfast just how much work could be done during the day, and manage accordingly —but now, they throw all my plans into disorder by taking my hands away from their work. . . . I am not getting along well

with the job-work. I can't work blindly—without system. I gave Dick a job yesterday, which I calculated he could set in two hours and I could work off on the press in three, and therefore just finish it by supper-time, but he was transferred to the Directory,[1] and the job, promised this morning, remains untouched. Through all the great pressure of job-work lately, I never before failed in a promise of the kind. . . .

The other letter is dated two months later, August 5th. It was written to Henry, who was visiting in St. Louis or Hannibal at the time, and introduces the first mention of the South American fever, which now possessed the writer. Lynch and Herndon had completed their survey of the upper Amazon, and Lieutenant Herndon's account of the exploration was being widely read. Poring over the book nights, young Clemens had been seized with a desire to go to the headwaters of the South American river, there to collect coca and make a fortune. All his life he was subject to such impulses as that, and ways and means were not always considered. It did not occur to him that it would be difficult to get to the Amazon and still more difficult to ascend the river. It was his nature to see results with a dazzling largeness that blinded him to the detail of their achievement. In the "Turning-point" article already mentioned he refers to this. He says:

That was more than fifty years ago. In all that time my temperament has not changed by even a shade. I have been punished many and many a time, and bitterly, for doing things and reflecting afterward, but these tortures have been of no value to me; I still do the thing commanded by Circumstance and Temperament, and reflect afterward. Always violently. When I am reflecting on these occasions, even deaf persons can hear me think.

[1] Orion printed two editions of the directory. This was probably the second one.

In the letter to Henry we see that his resolve was already made, his plans matured; also that Orion had not as yet been taken into full confidence.

Ma knows my determination, but even she counsels me to keep it from Orion. She says I can treat him as I did her when I started to St. Louis and went to New York—I can start for New York and go to South America.

He adds that Orion had promised him fifty or one hundred dollars, but that he does not depend upon it, and will make other arrangements. He fears obstacles may be put in his way, and he will bring various influences to bear.

I shall take care that Ma and Orion are plentifully supplied with South American books. They have Herndon's report now. Ward and the Dr. and myself will hold a grand consultation to-night at the office. We have agreed that no more shall be admitted into our company.

He had enlisted those two adventurers in his enterprise: a Doctor Martin and the young man, Ward. They were very much in earnest, but the start was not made as planned, most likely for want of means.

Young Clemens, however, did not give up the idea. He made up his mind to work in the direction of his desire, following his trade and laying by money for the venture. But Fate or Providence or Accident—whatever we may choose to call the unaccountable—stepped in just then, and laid before him the means of turning another sharp corner in his career. One of those things happened which we refuse to accept in fiction as possible; but fact has a smaller regard for the credibilities.

As in the case of the Joan of Arc episode (and this adds to its marvel), it was the wind that brought the talismanic gift. It was a day in early November—bleak, bitter, and

gusty, with curling snow; most persons were indoors. Samuel Clemens, going down Main Street, saw a flying bit of paper pass him and lodge against the side of a building. Something about it attracted him and he captured it. It was a fifty-dollar bill. He had never seen one before, but he recognized it. He thought he must be having a pleasant dream.

The temptation came to pocket his good-fortune and say nothing. His need of money was urgent, but he had also an urgent and troublesome conscience; in the end he advertised his find.

"I didn't describe it very particularly, and I waited in daily fear that the owner would turn up and take away my fortune. By and by I couldn't stand it any longer. My conscience had gotten all that was coming to it. I felt that I must take that money out of danger."

In the "Turning-point" article he says: "I advertised the find and left for the Amazon the same day," a statement which we may accept with a literary discount.

As a matter of fact, he remained ample time and nobody ever came for the money. It may have been swept out of a bank or caught up by the wind from some counting-room table. It may have materialized out of the unseen—who knows? At all events it carried him the first stage of a journey, the end of which he little dreamed.

XXI

A SCOTCHMAN NAMED MACFARLANE

HE concluded to go to Cincinnati, which would be on the way either to New York or New Orleans (he expected to sail from one of these points), but first paid a brief visit to his mother in St. Louis, for he had a far journey and a long absence in view. Jane Clemens made him renew his promise as to cards and liquor, and gave him her blessing. He had expected to go from St. Louis to Cincinnati, but a new idea—a literary idea—came to him, and he returned to Keokuk. The *Saturday Post*, a Keokuk weekly, was a prosperous sheet giving itself certain literary airs. He was in favor with the management, of which George Rees was the head, and it had occurred to him that he could send letters of his travels to the *Post*—for a consideration. He may have had a still larger ambition; at least, the possibility of a book seems to have been in his consciousness. Rees agreed to take letters from him at five dollars each—good payment for that time and place. The young traveler, jubilant in the prospect of receiving money for literature, now made another start, this time by way of Quincy, Chicago, and Indianapolis according to his first letter in the *Post*.[1]

This letter is dated Cincinnati, November 14, 1856, and it is not a promising literary production. It was written in the exaggerated dialect then regarded as humorous, and while here and there are flashes of the undoubted

[1] Supplied by Thomas Rees, of the Springfield (Illinois) *Register*, son of George Rees named.

Mark Twain type, they are few and far between. The genius that a little more than ten years later would delight the world flickered feebly enough at twenty-one. The letter is a burlesque account of the trip to Cincinnati. A brief extract from it, as characteristic as any, will serve.

I went down one night to the railroad office there, purty close onto the Laclede House, and bought about a quire o' yaller paper, cut up into tickets—one for each railroad in the United States, I thought, but I found out afterwards that the Alexandria and Boston Air-Line was left out—and then got a baggage feller to take my trunk down to the boat, where he spilled it out on the levee, bustin' it open and shakin' out the contents, consisting of "guides" to Chicago, and "guides" to Cincinnati, and travelers' guides, and all kinds of sich books, not excepting a "guide to heaven," which last aint much use to a feller in Chicago, I kin tell you. Finally, that fast packet quit ringing her bell, and started down the river—but she hadn't gone mor'n a mile, till she ran clean up on top of a sand-bar, whar she stuck till plum one o'clock, spite of the Captain's swearin'—and they had to set the whole crew to cussin' at last afore they got her off.

This is humor, we may concede, of that early American type which a little later would have its flower in Nasby and Artemus Ward. Only careful examination reveals in it a hint of the later Mark Twain. The letters were signed "Snodgrass," and there are but two of them. The second, dated exactly four months after the first, is in the same assassinating dialect, and recounts among other things the scarcity of coal in Cincinnati and an absurd adventure in which Snodgrass has a baby left on his hands.

From the fewness of the letters we may assume that Snodgrass found them hard work, and it is said he raised on the price. At all events, the second concluded the series. They are mainly important in that they are

the first of his contributions that have been preserved; also the first for which he received a cash return.

He secured work at his trade in Cincinnati at the printing-office of Wrightson & Co., and remained there until April, 1857. That winter in Cincinnati was eventless enough, but it was marked by one notable association —one that beyond doubt forwarded Samuel Clemens's general interest in books, influenced his taste, and inspired in him certain views and philosophies which he never forgot.

He lodged at a cheap boarding-house filled with the usual commonplace people, with one exception. This exception was a long, lank, unsmiling Scotchman named Macfarlane, who was twice as old as Clemens and wholly unlike him—without humor or any comprehension of it. Yet meeting on the common plane of intellect, the two became friends. Clemens spent his evenings in Macfarlane's room until the clock struck ten; then Macfarlane grilled a herring, just as the Englishman Sumner in Philadelphia had done two years before, and the evening ended.

Macfarlane had books, serious books: histories, philosophies, and scientific works; also a Bible and a dictionary. He had studied these and knew them by heart; he was a direct and diligent talker. He never talked of himself, and beyond the statement that he had acquired his knowledge from reading, and not at school, his personality was a mystery. He left the house at six in the morning and returned at the same hour in the evening. His hands were hardened from some sort of toil—mechanical labor, his companion thought, but he never knew. He would have liked to know, and he watched for some reference to slip out that would betray Macfarlane's trade; but this never happened.

What he did learn was that Macfarlane was a veritable storehouse of abstruse knowledge; a living dictionary,

and a thinker and philosopher besides. He had at least one vanity: the claim that he knew every word in the English dictionary, and he made it good. The younger man tried repeatedly to discover a word that Macfarlane could not define.

Perhaps Macfarlane was vain of his other mental attainments, for he never tired of discoursing upon deep and grave matters, and his companion never tired of listening. This Scotch philosopher did not always reflect the conclusions of others; he had speculated deeply and strikingly on his own account. That was a good while before Darwin and Wallace gave out their conclusions on the Descent of Man; yet Macfarlane was already advancing a similar philosophy. He went even further: Life, he said, had been developed in the course of ages from a few microscopic seed-germs—from one, perhaps, planted by the Creator in the dawn of time, and that from this beginning development on an ascending scale had finally produced man. Macfarlane said that the scheme had stopped there, and failed; that man had retrograded; that man's heart was the only bad one in the animal kingdom: that man was the only animal capable of malice, vindictiveness, drunkenness—almost the only animal that could endure personal uncleanliness. He said that man's intellect was a depraving addition to him which, in the end, placed him in a rank far below the other beasts, though it enabled him to keep them in servitude and captivity, along with many members of his own race.

They were long, fermenting discourses that young Samuel Clemens listened to that winter in Macfarlane's room, and those who knew the real Mark Twain and his philosophies will recognize that those evenings left their impress upon him for life.

XXII

THE OLD CALL OF THE RIVER

WHEN spring came, with budding life and quickening impulses; when the trees in the parks began to show a hint of green, the Amazonian idea developed afresh, and the would-be coca-hunter prepared for his expedition. He had saved a little money—enough to take him to New Orleans—and he decided to begin his long trip with a peaceful journey down the Mississippi; for once, at least, to give himself up to that indolent luxury of the majestic stream that had been so large a part of his early dreams.

The Ohio River steamers were not the most sumptuous craft afloat, but they were slow and hospitable. The winter had been bleak and hard. "Spring fever" and a large love of indolence had combined in that drowsy condition which makes one willing to take his time.

Mark Twain tells us in *Life on the Mississippi* that he "ran away," vowing never to return until he could come home a pilot, shedding glory. This is a literary statement. The pilot ambition had never entirely died; but it was coca and the Amazon that were uppermost in his head when he engaged passage on the *Paul Jones* for New Orleans, and so conferred immortality on that ancient little craft. He bade good-by to Macfarlane, put his traps aboard, the bell rang, the whistle blew, the gang-plank was hauled in, and he had set out on a voyage that was to continue not for a week or a fortnight, but for four years—four marvelous, sunlit years, the glory of which would color all that followed them.

In the Mississippi book the author conveys the impression of being then a boy of perhaps seventeen. Writing from that standpoint he records incidents that were more or less inventions or that happened to others. He was, in reality, considerably more than twenty-one years old, for it was in April, 1857, that he went aboard the *Paul Jones*, and he was fairly familiar with steamboats and the general requirements of piloting. He had been brought up in a town that turned out pilots; he had heard the talk of their trade. One at least of the Bowen boys was already on the river while Sam Clemens was still a boy in Hannibal, and had often been home to air his grandeur and dilate on the marvel of his work. That learning the river was no light task Sam Clemens very well knew. Nevertheless, as the little boat made its drowsy way down the river into lands that grew ever pleasanter with advancing spring, the old "permanent ambition" of boyhood stirred again, and the call of the far-away Amazon, with its coca and its variegated zoology, grew faint.

Horace Bixby, pilot of the *Paul Jones*, then a man of thirty-two, still living (1910) and at the wheel,[1] was looking out over the bow at the head of Island No. 35 when he heard a slow, pleasant voice say:

"Good morning."

Bixby was a clean-cut, direct, courteous man.

"Good morning, sir," he said, briskly, without looking around.

As a rule Mr. Bixby did not care for visitors in the pilot-house. This one presently came up and stood a little behind him.

"How would you like a young man to learn the river?" he said.

The pilot glanced over his shoulder and saw a rather

[1] The writer of this memoir interviewed Mr. Bixby personally, and has followed his phrasing throughout.

slender, loose-limbed young fellow with a fair, girlish complexion and a great tangle of auburn hair.

"I wouldn't like it. Cub pilots are more trouble than they're worth. A great deal more trouble than profit."

The applicant was not discouraged.

"I am a printer by trade," he went on, in his easy, deliberate way. "It doesn't agree with me. I thought I'd go to South America."

Bixby kept his eye on the river; but a note of interest crept into his voice.

"What makes you pull your words that way?" ("pulling" being the river term for drawling), he asked.

The young man had taken a seat on the visitors' bench.

"You'll have to ask my mother," he said, more slowly than ever. "She pulls hers, too."

Pilot Bixby woke up and laughed; he had a keen sense of humor, and the manner of the reply amused him. His guest made another advance.

"Do you know the Bowen boys?" he asked—"pilots in the St. Louis and New Orleans trade?"

"I know them well—all three of them. William Bowen did his first steering for me; a mighty good boy, too. Had a Testament in his pocket when he came aboard; in a week's time he had swapped it for a pack of cards. I know Sam, too, and Bart."

"Old schoolmates of mine in Hannibal. Sam and Will especially were my chums."

"Come over and stand by the side of me," said Bixby. "What is your name?"

The applicant told him, and the two stood looking at the sunlit water.

"Do you drink?"

"No."

"Do you gamble?"

"No, sir."

"Do you swear?"

"Not for amusement; only under pressure."

"Do you chew?"

"No, sir, never; but I *must smoke*."

"Did you ever do any steering?" was Bixby's next question.

"I have steered everything on the river but a steamboat, I guess."

"Very well; take the wheel and see what you can do with a steamboat. Keep her as she is—toward that lower cottonwood snag."

Bixby had a sore foot and was glad of a little relief. He sat down on the bench and kept a careful eye on the course. By and by he said:

"There is just one way that I would take a young man to learn the river: that is, for money."

"What do you charge?"

"Five hundred dollars, and I to be at no expense whatever."

In those days pilots were allowed to carry a learner, or "cub," board free. Mr. Bixby meant that he was to be at no expense in port, or for incidentals. His terms looked rather discouraging.

"I haven't got five hundred dollars in money," Sam said; "I've got a lot of Tennessee land worth twenty-five cents an acre; I'll give you two thousand acres of that."

Bixby dissented.

"No; I don't want any unimproved real estate. I have too much already."

Sam reflected upon the amount he could probably borrow from Pamela's husband without straining his credit.

"Well, then, I'll give you one hundred dollars cash and the rest when I earn it."

Something about this young man had won Horace Bixby's heart. His slow, pleasant speech; his unhurried,

quiet manner with the wheel, his evident sincerity of purpose—these were externals, but beneath them the pilot felt something of that quality of mind or heart which later made the world love Mark Twain. The terms proposed were agreed upon. The deferred payments were to begin when the pupil had learned the river and was receiving pilot's wages. During Mr. Bixby's daylight watches his pupil was often at the wheel, that trip, while the pilot sat directing him and nursing his sore foot. Any literary ambitions Samuel Clemens may have had grew dim; by the time they had reached New Orleans he had almost forgotten he had been a printer, and when he learned that no ship would be sailing to the Amazon for an indefinite period the feeling grew that a directing hand had taken charge of his affairs.

From New Orleans his chief did not return to Cincinnati, but went to St. Louis, taking with him his new cub, who thought it fine, indeed, to come steaming up to that great city with its thronging water-front; its levee fairly packed with trucks, drays, and piles of freight, the whole flanked with a solid mile of steamboats lying side by side, bow a little up-stream, their belching stacks reared high against the blue—a towering front of trade. It was glorious to nose one's way to a place in that stately line, to become a unit, however small, of that imposing fleet.

At St. Louis Sam borrowed from Mr. Moffett the funds necessary to make up his first payment, and so concluded his contract. Then, when he suddenly found himself on a fine big boat, in a pilot-house so far above the water that he seemed perched on a mountain—a "sumptuous temple"—his happiness seemed complete.

XXIII

THE SUPREME SCIENCE

IN his Mississippi book Mark Twain has given us a marvelous exposition of the science of river-piloting, and of the colossal task of acquiring and keeping a knowledge requisite for that work. He has not exaggerated this part of the story of developments in any detail; he has set down a simple confession.

Serenely enough he undertook the task of learning twelve hundred miles of the great changing, shifting river as exactly and as surely by daylight or darkness as one knows the way to his own features. As already suggested, he had at least an inkling of what that undertaking meant. His statement that he "supposed all that a pilot had to do was to keep his boat in the river" is not to be accepted literally. Still he could hardly have realized the full majesty of his task; nobody could do that—not until afterward.

Horace Bixby was a "lightning" pilot with a method of instruction as direct and forcible as it was effective. He was a small man, hot and quick-firing, though kindly, too, and gentle when he had blown off. After one rather pyrotechnic misunderstanding as to the manner of imparting and acquiring information he said:

"My boy, you must get a little memorandum-book, and every time I tell you a thing put it down right away. There's only one way to be a pilot, and that is to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A B C."

So Sam Clemens got the little book, and presently it "fairly bristled" with the names of towns, points, bars, islands, bends, and reaches, but it made his heart ache to think that he had only half of the river set down; for, as the "watches" were four hours off and four hours on, there were long gaps during which he had slept.

The little note-book still exists—thin and faded, with black water-proof covers—its neat, tiny, penciled notes still telling the story of that first trip. Most of them are cryptographic abbreviations, not readily deciphered now. Here and there is an easier line:

MERIWEATHER'S BEND

¼ less 3[1]—run shape of upper bar and go into the low place in willows about 200 (ft.) lower down than last year.

One simple little note out of hundreds far more complicated. It would take days for the average mind to remember even a single page of such statistics. And those long four-hour gaps where he had been asleep, they are still there, and somehow, after more than fifty years, the old heart-ache is still in them. He got a new book, maybe, for the next trip, and laid this one away.

There is but one way to account for the fact that the man whom the world knew as Mark Twain—dreamy, unpractical, and indifferent to details—ever persisted in acquiring knowledge like that—in the vast, the absolutely limitless quantity necessary to Mississippi piloting. It lies in the fact that he loved the river in its every mood and aspect and detail, and not only the river, but a steamboat; and still more, perhaps, the freedom of the pilot's life and its prestige. Wherever he has written of the river—and in one way or another he was always writing of it—we feel the claim of the old captivity and that it

[1] Depth of water. One-quarter less than three fathoms.

still holds him. In the *Huckleberry Finn* book, during those nights and days with Huck and Nigger Jim on the raft—whether in stormlit blackness, still noontide, or the lifting mists of morning—we can fairly "smell" the river, as Huck himself would say, and we know that it is because the writer loved it with his heart of hearts and literally drank in its environment and atmosphere during those halcyon pilot days.

So, in his love lay the secret of his marvelous learning, and it is recorded (not by himself, but by his teacher) that he was an apt pupil. Horace Bixby has more than once declared:

"Sam was always good-natured, and he had a natural taste for the river. He had a fine memory and never forgot anything I told him."

Mark Twain himself records a different opinion of his memory, with the size of its appalling task. It can only be presented in his own words. In the pages quoted he had mastered somewhat of the problem, and had begun to take on airs. His chief was a constant menace at such moments:

> One day he turned on me suddenly with this settler:
>
> "What is the shape of Walnut Bend?"
>
> He might as well have asked me my grandmother's opinion of protoplasm. I reflected respectfully, and then said I didn't know it had any particular shape. My gun-powdery chief went off with a bang, of course, and then went on loading and firing until he was out of adjectives. . . . I waited. By and by he said:
>
> "My boy, you've got to know the *shape* of the river perfectly. It is all there is left to steer by on a very dark night. Everything is blotted out and gone. But mind you, it hasn't the same shape in the night that it has in the daytime."
>
> "How on earth am I ever going to learn it, then?"
>
> "How do you follow a hall at home in the dark? Because you know the shape of it. You can't see it."
>
> "Do you mean to say that I've got to know all the million

trifling variations of shape in the banks of this interminable river as well as I know the shape of the front hall at home?"

"On my honor, you've got to know them *better* than any man ever did know the shapes of the halls in his own house."

"I wish I was dead!"

"Now, I don't want to discourage you, but—"

"Well, pile it on me; I might as well have it now as another time."

"You see, this has got to be learned; there isn't any getting around it. A clear starlight night throws such heavy shadows that, if you didn't know the shape of a shore perfectly, you would claw away from every bunch of timber, because you would take the black shadow of it for a solid cape; and, you see, you would be getting scared to death every fifteen minutes by the watch. You would be fifty yards from shore all the time when you ought to be within fifty feet of it. You can't see a snag in one of those shadows, but you know exactly where it is, and the shape of the river tells you when you are coming to it. Then there's your pitch-dark night; the river is a very different shape on a pitch-dark night from what it is on a starlight night. All shores seem to be straight lines, then, and mighty dim ones, too; and you'd *run* them for straight lines, only you know better. You boldly drive your boat right into what seems to be a solid, straight wall (you know very well that in reality there is a curve there), and that wall falls back and makes way for you. Then there's your gray mist. You take a night when there's one of these grisly, drizzly, gray mists, and then there isn't *any* particular shape to a shore. A gray mist would tangle the head of the oldest nan that ever lived. Well, then, different kinds of *moonlight* c ange the shape of the river in different ways. You see—"

"Oh, don't say any more, please! Have I got to learn the shape of the river according to all these five hundred thousand different ways? If I tried to carry all that cargo in my head it would make me stoop-shouldered."

"*No!* you only learn *the* shape of the river; and you learn it with such absolute certainty that you can always steer by the shape that's in your *head*, and never mind the one that's before your eyes."

"Very well, I'll try it; but, after I have learned it, can I de-

pend on it? Will it keep the same form, and not go fooling around?"

Before Mr. Bixby could answer, Mr. W. came in to take the watch, and he said:

"Bixby, you'll have to look out for President's Island, and all that country clear away up above the Old Hen and Chickens. The banks are caving and the shape of the shores changing like everything. Why, you wouldn't know the point about 40. You can go up inside the old sycamore snag now."

So that question was answered. Here were leagues of shore changing shape. My spirits were down in the mud again. Two things seemed pretty apparent to me. One was that in order to be a pilot a man had got to learn more than any one man ought to be allowed to know; and the other was that he must learn it all over again in a different way every twenty-four hours.

I went to work now to learn the shape of the river; and of all the eluding and ungraspable objects that ever I tried to get mind or hands on, that was the chief. I would fasten my eyes upon a sharp, wooded point that projected far into the river some miles ahead of me and go to laboriously photographing its shape upon my brain; and just as I was beginning to succeed to my satisfaction we would draw up to it, and the exasperating thing would begin to melt away and fold back into the bank!

It was plain that I had got to learn the shape of the river in all the different ways that could be thought of—upside down, wrong end first, inside out, fore-and-aft, and "thort-ships,"—and then know what to do on gray nights when it hadn't any shape at all. So I set about it. In the course of time I began to get the best of this knotty lesson, and my self-complacency moved to the front once more. Mr. Bixby was all fixed and ready to start it to the rear again. He opened on me after this fashion:

"How much water did we have in the middle crossing at Hole-in-the-Wall, trip before last?"

I considered this an outrage. I said:

"Every trip down and up the leadsmen are singing through that tangled place for three-quarters of an hour on a stretch. How do you reckon I can remember such a mess as that?"

"My boy, you've got to remember it. You've got to remember the exact spot and the exact marks the boat lay in when we

had the shoalest water, in every one of the five hundred shoal places between St. Louis and New Orleans; and you mustn't get the shoal soundings and marks of one trip mixed up with the shoal soundings and marks of another, either, for they're not often twice alike. You must keep them separate."

When I came to myself again, I said:

"When I get so that I can do that, I'll be able to raise the dead, and then I won't have to pilot a steamboat to make a living. I want to retire from this business. I want a slush-bucket and a brush; I'm only fit for a roustabout. I haven't got brains enough to be a pilot; and if I had I wouldn't have strength enough to carry them around, unless I went on crutches."

"Now drop that! When I say I'll learn a man the river I mean it. And you can depend on it, I'll learn him or kill him."

We have quoted at length from this chapter because it seems of very positive importance here. It is one of the most luminous in the book so far as the mastery of the science of piloting is concerned, and shows better than could any other combination of words something of what is required of the learner. It does not cover the whole problem, by any means—Mark Twain himself could not present that; and even considering his old-time love of the river and the pilot's trade, it is still incredible that a man of his temperament could have persisted, as he did, against such obstacles.

XXIV

THE RIVER CURRICULUM

HE acquired other kinds of knowledge. As the streets of Hannibal in those early days, and the printing-offices of several cities, had taught him human nature in various unvarnished aspects, so the river furnished an added course to that vigorous education. Morally, its atmosphere could not be said to be an improvement on the others. Navigation in the West had begun with crafts of the flat-boat type—their navigators rude, hardy men, heavy drinkers, reckless fighters, barbaric in their sports, coarse in their wit, profane in everything. Steamboatmen were the natural successors of these pioneers—a shade less coarse, a thought less profane, a veneer less barbaric. But these things were mainly "above stairs." You had but to scratch lightly a mate or a deck-hand to find the old keel-boatman savagery. Captains were overlords, and pilots kings in this estate; but they were not angels. In *Life on the Mississippi* Clemens refers to his chief's explosive vocabulary and tells us how he envied the mate's manner of giving an order. It was easier to acquire those things than piloting, and, on the whole, quicker. One could improve upon them, too, with imagination and wit and a natural gift for terms. That Samuel Clemens maintained his promise as to drink and cards during those apprentice days is something worth remembering; and if he did not always restrict his profanity to moments of severe pressure or sift the quality of his wit, we may also remember that he was an extreme

example of a human being, in that formative stage which gathers all as grist, later to refine it for the uses and delights of men.

He acquired a vast knowledge of human character. He says:

> In that brief, sharp schooling I got personally and familiarly acquainted with all the different types of human nature that are to be found in fiction, biography, or history. When I find a well-drawn character in fiction or biography, I generally take a warm personal interest in him, for the reason that I have known him before—met him on the river.

Undoubtedly the river was a great school for the study of life's broader philosophies and humors: philosophies that avoid vague circumlocution and aim at direct and sure results; humors of the rugged and vigorous sort that in Europe are known as "American" and in America are known as "Western." Let us be thankful that Mark Twain's school was no less than it was—and no more.

The demands of the Missouri River trade took Horace Bixby away from the Mississippi, somewhat later, and he consigned his pupil, according to custom, to another pilot—it is not certain, now, to just which pilot, but probably to Zeb Leavenworth or Beck Jolly, of the *John J. Roe*. The *Roe* was a freight-boat, "as slow as an island and as comfortable as a farm." In fact, the *Roe* was owned and conducted by farmers, and Sam Clemens thought if John Quarles's farm could be set afloat it would greatly resemble that craft in the matter of good-fellowship, hospitality, and speed. It was said of her that up-stream she could even beat an island, though down-stream she could never quite overtake the current, but was a "love of a steamboat" nevertheless. The *Roe* was not licensed to carry passengers, but she always had a dozen "family guests" aboard, and there was a big boiler-deck for dancing and moonlight frolics, also a

piano in the cabin. The young pilot sometimes played on the piano and sang to his music songs relating to the "grasshopper on the sweet-potato vine," or to an old horse by the name of Methusalem:

> Took him down and sold him in Jerusalem,
> A long time ago.

There were forty-eight stanzas about this ancient horse, all pretty much alike; but the assembled company was not likely to be critical, and his efforts won him laurels. He had a heavenly time on the *John J. Roe*, and then came what seemed inferno by contrast. Bixby returned, made a trip or two, then left and transferred him again, this time to a man named Brown. Brown had a berth on the fine new steamer *Pennsylvania*, one of the handsomest boats on the river, and young Clemens had become a good steersman, so it is not unlikely that both men at first were gratified by the arrangement.

But Brown was a fault-finding, tyrannical chief, ignorant, vulgar, and malicious. In the Mississippi book the author gives his first interview with Brown, also his last one. For good reasons these occasions were burned into his memory, and they may be accepted as substantially correct. Brown had an offensive manner. His first greeting was a surly question.

"Are you Horace Bigsby's cub?"

"Bixby" was usually pronounced "Bigsby" on the river, but Brown made it especially obnoxious and followed it up with questions and comments and orders still more odious. His subordinate soon learned to detest him thoroughly. It was necessary, however, to maintain a respectable deportment—custom, discipline, even the law, required that—but it must have been a hard winter and spring the young steersman put in during those early months of 1858, restraining himself from the gratification of slaying Brown. Time would bring revenge—

a tragic revenge and at a fearful cost; but he could not guess that, and he put in his spare time planning punishments of his own.

I could imagine myself killing Brown; there was no law against that, and that was the thing I always used to do the moment I was abed. Instead of going over my river in my mind, as was my duty, I threw business aside for pleasure and killed Brown. I killed Brown every night for a month; not in old, stale, commonplace ways, but in new and picturesque ones—ways that were sometimes surprising for freshness of design and ghastly for situation and environment.

Once when Brown had been more insulting than usual his subordinate went to bed and killed him in "seventeen different ways—all of them new."

He had made an effort at first to please Brown, but it was no use. Brown was the sort of a man that refused to be pleased; no matter how carefully his subordinate steered, he was always at him.

"Here," he would shout, "where are you going now? Pull her *down!* Pull her *down!* Don't you *hear* me? *Dod-derned mud-cat!*"

His assistant lost all desire to be obliging to such a person and even took occasion now and then to stir him up. One day they were steaming up the river when Brown noticed that the boat seemed to be heading toward some unusual point.

"Here, where are you heading for now?" he yelled. "What in nation are you steerin' at, anyway? *Derned numskull!*"

"Why," said Sam, in unruffled deliberation, "I didn't see much else I could steer for, and I was heading for that white heifer on the bank."

"Get away from that wheel! and get outen this pilot-house!" yelled Brown. "You ain't fit to become no pilot!"

Which was what Sam wanted. Any temporary relief from the carping tyranny of Brown was welcome.

He had been on the river nearly a year now, and, though universally liked and accounted a fine steersman, he was receiving no wages. There had been small need of money for a while, for he had no board to pay; but clothes wear out at last, and there were certain incidentals. The *Pennsylvania* made a round trip in about thirty-five days, with a day or two of idle time at either end. The young pilot found that he could get night employment, watching freight on the New Orleans levee, and thus earn from two and a half to three dollars for each night's watch. Sometimes there would be two nights, and with a capital of five or six dollars he accounted himself rich.

"It was a desolate experience," he said, long afterward, "watching there in the dark among those piles of freight; not a sound, not a living creature astir. But it was not a profitless one: I used to have inspirations as I sat there alone those nights. I used to imagine all sorts of situations and possibilities. Those things got into my books by and by and furnished me with many a chapter. I can trace the effect of those nights through most of my books in one way and another."

Many of the curious tales in the latter half of the Mississippi book came out of those long night-watches. It was a good time to think of such things.

XXV

LOVE-MAKING AND ADVENTURE

OF course, life with Brown was not all sorrow. At either end of the trip there was respite and recreation. In St. Louis, at Pamela's, there was likely to be company: Hannibal friends mostly, schoolmates—girls, of course. At New Orleans he visited friendly boats, especially the *John J. Roe*, where he was generously welcomed. One such visit on the *Roe* he never forgot. A young girl was among the boat's guests that trip—another Laura, fifteen, winning, delightful. They met, and were mutually attracted; in the life of each it was one of those bright spots which are likely to come in youth: one of those sudden, brief periods of romance, love—call it what you will — the thing that leads to marriage, if pursued.

"I was not four inches from that girl's elbow during our waking hours for the next three days."

Then came a sudden interruption: Zeb Leavenworth came flying aft shouting:

"The *Pennsylvania* is backing out."

A flutter of emotion, a fleeting good-by, a flight across the decks, a flying leap from romance back to reality, and it was all over. He wrote her, but received no reply. He never saw her again, never heard from her for forty-eight years, when both were married, widowed, and old. She had not received his letter.

Even on the *Pennsylvania* life had its interests. A letter dated March 9, 1858, recounts a delightfully dan-

gerous night-adventure in the steamer's yawl, hunting for soundings in the running ice.

Then the fun commenced. We made fast a line 20 fathoms long, to the bow of the yawl, and put the men (both crews) to it like horses on the shore. Brown, the pilot, stood in the bow, with an oar, to keep her head out, and I took the tiller. We would start the men, and all would go well till the yawl would bring up on a heavy cake of ice, and then the men would drop like so many tenpins, while Brown assumed the horizontal in the bottom of the boat. After an hour's hard work we got back, with ice half an inch thick on the oars. Sent back and warped up the other yawl, and then George (George Ealer, the other pilot) and myself took a double crew of fresh men and tried it again. This time we found the channel in less than half an hour, and landed on an island till the *Pennsylvania* came along and took us off. The next day was colder still. I was out in the yawl twice, and then we got through, but the infernal steamboat came near running over us. . . . We sounded Hat Island, warped up around a bar, and sounded again—but in order to understand our situation you will have to read Dr. Kane. It would have been impossible to get back to the boat. But the *Maria Denning* was aground at the head of the island—they hailed us—we ran alongside, and they hoisted us in and thawed us out. We had then been out in the yawl from four o'clock in the morning till half past nine without being near a fire. There was a thick coating of ice over men, and yawl, ropes and everything else, and we looked like rock-candy statuary.

This was the sort of thing he loved in those days. We feel the writer's evident joy and pride in it. In the same letter he says: "I can't correspond with the paper, because when one is learning the river he is not allowed to do or think about anything else." Then he mentions his brother Henry, and we get the beginning of that tragic episode for which, though blameless, Samuel Clemens always held himself responsible.

Henry was doing little or nothing here (St. Louis), and I sent him to our clerk to work his way for a trip, measuring

wood-piles, counting coal-boxes, and doing other clerkly duties, which he performed satisfactorily. He may go down with us again.

Henry Clemens was about twenty at this time, a handsome, attractive boy of whom his brother was lavishly fond and proud. He did go on the next trip and continued to go regularly after that, as third clerk in line of promotion. It was a bright spot in those hard days with Brown to have Henry along. The boys spent a good deal of their leisure with the other pilot, George Ealer, who "was as kind-hearted as Brown wasn't," and quoted Shakespeare and Goldsmith, and played the flute to his fascinated and inspiring audience. These were things worth while. The young steersman could not guess that the shadow of a long sorrow was even then stretching across the path ahead.

Yet in due time he received a warning, a remarkable and impressive warning, though of a kind seldom heeded. One night, when the *Pennsylvania* lay in St. Louis, he slept at his sister's house and had this vivid dream:

He saw Henry, a corpse, lying in a metallic burial case in the sitting-room, supported on two chairs. On his breast lay a bouquet of flowers, white, with a single crimson bloom in the center.

When he awoke, it was morning, but the dream was so vivid that he believed it real. Perhaps something of the old hypnotic condition was upon him, for he rose and dressed, thinking he would go in and look at his dead brother. Instead, he went out on the street in the early morning and had walked to the middle of the block before it suddenly flashed upon him that it was only a dream. He bounded back, rushed to the sitting-room, and felt a great trembling revulsion of joy when he found it really empty. He told Pamela the dream, then put it out of his mind as quickly as he could. The *Pennsylvania* sailed from St. Louis as usual, and made a safe trip to New Orleans.

A safe trip, but an eventful one; on it occurred that last interview with Brown, already mentioned. It is recorded in the Mississippi book, but cannot be omitted here. Somewhere down the river (it was in Eagle Bend) Henry appeared on the hurricane deck to bring an order from the captain for a landing to be made a little lower down. Brown was somewhat deaf, but would never confess it. He may not have understood the order; at all events he gave no sign of having heard it, and went straight ahead. He disliked Henry as he disliked everybody of finer grain than himself, and in any case was too arrogant to ask for a repetition. They were passing the landing when Captain Klinefelter appeared on deck and called to him to let the boat come around, adding:

"Didn't Henry tell you to land here?"

"No, sir."

Captain Klinefelter turned to Sam:

"Didn't you hear him?"

"Yes, sir."

Brown said: "Shut your mouth! You never heard anything of the kind."

By and by Henry came into the pilot-house, unaware of any trouble. Brown set upon him in his ugliest manner.

"Here, why didn't you tell me we had got to land at that plantation?" he demanded.

Henry was always polite, always gentle.

"I did tell you, Mr. Brown."

"It's a lie."

Sam Clemens could stand Brown's abuse of himself, but not of Henry. He said: "You lie yourself. He did tell you."

Brown was dazed for a moment and then he shouted: "I'll attend to your case in half a minute!" and ordered Henry out of the pilot-house.

The boy had started, when Brown suddenly seized him

by the collar and struck him in the face.[1] Instantly Sam was upon Brown, with a heavy stool, and stretched him on the floor. Then all the bitterness and indignation that had been smoldering for months flamed up, and, leaping upon Brown and holding him with his knees, he pounded him with his fists until strength and fury gave out. Brown struggled free, then, and with pilot instinct sprang to the wheel, for the vessel had been drifting and might have got into trouble. Seeing there was no further danger, he seized a spy-glass as a weapon.

"Get out of this here pilot-house," he raged.

But his subordinate was not afraid of him now.

"You should leave out the 'here,'" he drawled, critically. "It is understood, and not considered good English form."

"Don't you give me none of your airs," yelled Brown. "I ain't going to stand nothing more from you."

"You should say, 'Don't give me any of your airs,'" Sam said, sweetly, "and the last half of your sentence almost defies correction."

A group of passengers and white-aproned servants, assembled on the deck forward, applauded the victor.

Brown turned to the wheel, raging and growling. Clemens went below, where he expected Captain Klinefelter to put him in irons, perhaps, for it was thought to be felony to strike a pilot. The officer took him into his private room and closed the door. At first he looked

[1] In the Mississippi book the writer states that Brown started to strike Henry with a large piece of coal; but, in a letter written soon after the occurrence to Mrs. Orion Clemens, he says:

"Henry started out of the pilot-house—Brown jumped up and collared him—turned him half-way around and struck him in the face!—and him nearly six feet high—struck my little brother. I was wild from that moment. I left the boat to steer herself, and avenged the insult—and the captain said I was right."

at the culprit thoughtfully, then he made some inquiries:

"Did you strike him first?" Captain Klinefelter asked.
"Yes, sir."
"What with?"
"A stool, sir."
"Hard?"
"Middling, sir."
"Did it knock him down?"
"He—he fell, sir."
"Did you follow it up? Did you do anything further?"
"Yes, sir."
"What did you do?"
"Pounded him, sir."
"Pounded him?"
"Yes, sir."
"Did you pound him much—that is, severely?"
"One might call it that, sir, maybe."
"I am deuced glad of it! Hark ye, never mention that I said that. You have been guilty of a great crime; and don't ever be guilty of it again on this boat, *but*—lay for him ashore! Give him a good sound thrashing; do you hear? I'll pay the expenses!" [1]

Captain Klinefelter told him to clear out, then, and the culprit heard him enjoying himself as the door closed behind him. Brown, of course, forbade him the pilot-house after that, and he spent the rest of the trip "an emancipated slave" listening to George Ealer's flute and his readings from Goldsmith and Shakespeare; playing chess with him sometimes, and learning a trick which he would use himself in the long after-years—that of taking back the last move and running out the game differently when he saw defeat.

Brown swore that he would leave the boat at New Orleans if Sam Clemens remained on it, and Captain

[1] "Life on the Mississippi."

Klinefelter told Brown to go. Then when another pilot could not be obtained to fill his place, the captain offered to let Clemens himself run the daylight watches, thus showing his confidence in the knowledge of the young steersman, who had been only a little more than a year at the wheel. But Clemens himself had less confidence and advised the captain to keep Brown back to St. Louis. He would follow up the river by another boat and resume his place as steersman when Brown was gone. Without knowing it, he may have saved his life by that decision.

It is doubtful if he remembered his recent disturbing dream, though some foreboding would seem to have hung over him the night before the *Pennsylvania* sailed. Henry liked to join in the night-watches on the levee when he had finished his duties, and the brothers often walked the round chatting together. On this particular night the elder spoke of disaster on the river. Finally he said:

"In case of accident, whatever you do, don't lose your head—the passengers will do that. Rush for the hurricane deck and to the life-boat, and obey the mate's orders. When the boat is launched, help the women and children into it. Don't get in yourself. The river is only a mile wide. You can swim ashore easily enough."

It was good manly advice, but it yielded a long harvest of sorrow.

XXVI

THE TRAGEDY OF THE "PENNSYLVANIA"

CAPTAIN KLINEFELTER obtained his steersman a pass on the *A. T. Lacey*, which left two days behind the *Pennsylvania*. This was pleasant, for Bart Bowen had become captain of that fine boat. The *Lacey* touched at Greenville, Mississippi, and a voice from the landing shouted:

"The *Pennsylvania* is blown up just below Memphis, at Ship Island! One hundred and fifty lives lost!"

Nothing further could be learned there, but that evening at Napoleon a Memphis extra reported some of the particulars. Henry Clemens's name was mentioned as one of those who had escaped injury. Still farther up the river they got a later extra. Henry was again mentioned; this time as being scalded beyond recovery. By the time they reached Memphis they knew most of the details: At six o'clock that warm mid-June morning, while loading wood from a large flat-boat sixty miles below Memphis, four out of eight of the *Pennsylvania's* boilers had suddenly exploded with fearful results. All the forward end of the boat had been blown out. Many persons had been killed outright; many more had been scalded and crippled and would die. It was one of those hopeless, wholesale steamboat slaughters which for more than a generation had made the Mississippi a river of death and tears.

Samuel Clemens found his brother stretched upon a mattress on the floor of an improvised hospital—a public hall—surrounded by more than thirty others more or

less desperately injured. He was told that Henry had inhaled steam and that his body was badly scalded. His case was considered hopeless.

Henry was one of those who had been blown into the river by the explosion. He had started to swim for the shore, only a few hundred yards away, but presently, feeling no pain and believing himself unhurt, he had turned back to assist in the rescue of the others. What he did after that could not be clearly learned. The vessel had taken fire; the rescued were being carried aboard the big wood-boat still attached to the wreck. The fire soon raged so that the rescuers and all who could be saved were driven into the wood-flat, which was then cut adrift and landed. There the sufferers had to lie in the burning sun many hours until help could come. Henry was among those who were insensible by that time. Perhaps he had really been uninjured at first and had been scalded in his work of rescue; it will never be known.

His brother, hearing these things, was thrown into the deepest agony and remorse. He held himself to blame for everything; for Henry's presence on the boat; for his advice concerning safety of others; for his own absence when he might have been there to help and protect the boy. He wanted to telegraph at once to his mother and sister to come, but the doctors persuaded him to wait—just why, he never knew. He sent word of the disaster to Orion, who by this time had sold out in Keokuk and was in East Tennessee studying law; then he set himself to the all but hopeless task of trying to bring Henry back to life. Many Memphis ladies were acting as nurses, and one, a Miss Wood, attracted by the boy's youth and striking features, joined in the desperate effort. Some medical students had come to assist the doctors, and one of these also took special interest in Henry's case. Dr. Peyton, an old Memphis practitioner, declared that with such care the boy might pull through.

But on the fourth night he was considered to be dying. Half delirious with grief and the strain of watching, Samuel Clemens wrote to his mother and to his sister-in-law in Tennessee. The letter to Orion Clemens's wife has been preserved.

MEMPHIS, TENN., *Friday, June* 18, 1858.

DEAR SISTER MOLLIE,—Long before this reaches you my poor Henry—my darling, my pride, my glory, my *all* will have finished his blameless career, and the light of my life will have gone out in utter darkness. The horrors of three days have swept over me—they have blasted my youth and left me an old man before my time. Mollie, there are gray hairs in my head to-night. For forty-eight hours I labored at the bedside of my poor burned and bruised but uncomplaining brother, and then the star of my hope went out and left me in the gloom of despair. Men take me by the hand and *congratulate* me, and call me "*lucky*" because I was not on the *Pennsylvania* when she blew up! May God forgive them, for they know not what they say.

I was on the *Pennsylvania* five minutes before she left N. Orleans, and I must tell you the truth, Mollie—*three hundred* human beings perished by that fearful disaster. But may God bless Memphis, the noblest city on the face of the earth. She has done her duty by these poor afflicted creatures—especially Henry, for he has had five—aye, ten, fifteen, *twenty* times the care and attention that any one else has had. Dr. Peyton, the best physician in Memphis (he is exactly like the portraits of Webster), sat by him for 36 hours. There are 32 scalded men in that room, and you would know Dr. Peyton better than I can describe him if you could follow him around and hear each man murmur as he passes, "May the God of Heaven bless you, Doctor!" The ladies have done well, too. Our second mate, a handsome, noble-hearted young fellow, will die. Yesterday a beautiful girl of 15 stooped timidly down by his side and handed him a pretty bouquet. The poor suffering boy's eyes kindled, his lips quivered out a gentle "God bless you, Miss," and he burst into tears. He made

them write her name on a card for him, that he might not forget it.

Pray for me, Mollie, and pray for my poor sinless brother.

Your unfortunate brother,

SAML. L. CLEMENS.

P. S.—I got here two days after Henry.

But, alas, this was not all, nor the worst. It would seem that Samuel Clemens's cup of remorse must be always overfull. The final draft that would embitter his years was added the sixth night after the accident—the night that Henry died. He could never bring himself to write it. He was never known to speak of it but twice.

Henry had rallied soon after the foregoing letter had been mailed, and improved slowly that day and the next. Dr. Peyton came around about eleven o'clock on the sixth night and made careful examination. He said:

"I believe he is out of danger and will get well. He is likely to be restless during the night; the groans and fretting of the others will disturb him. If he cannot rest without it, tell the physician in charge to give him one-eighth of a grain of morphine."

The boy did wake during the night, and was disturbed by the complaining of the other sufferers. His brother told the young medical student in charge what the doctor had said about the morphine. But morphine was a new drug then; the student hesitated, saying:

"I have no way of measuring. I don't know how much an eighth of a grain would be."

Henry grew rapidly worse—more and more restless. His brother was half beside himself with the torture of it. He went to the medical student.

"If you have studied drugs," he said, "you ought to be able to judge an eighth of a grain of morphine."

The young man's courage was overswayed. He yielded and ladled out in the old-fashioned way, on the point

of a knife-blade, what he believed to be the right amount. Henry immediately sank into a heavy sleep. He died before morning. His chance of life had been infinitesimal, and his death was not necessarily due to the drug, but Samuel Clemens, unsparing in his self-blame, all his days carried the burden of it.

He saw the boy taken to the dead room, then the long strain of grief, the days and nights without sleep, the ghastly realization of the end overcame him. A citizen of Memphis took him away in a kind of daze and gave him a bed in his house, where he fell into a stupor of fatigue and surrender. It was many hours before he woke; when he did, at last, he dressed and went to where Henry lay. The coffin provided for the dead were of unpainted wood, but the youth and striking face of Henry Clemens had aroused a special interest. The ladies of Memphis had made up a fund of sixty dollars and bought for him a metallic case. Samuel Clemens entering, saw his brother lying exactly as he had seen him in his dream, lacking only the bouquet of white flowers with its crimson center—a detail made complete while he stood there, for at that moment an elderly lady came in with a large white bouquet, and in the center of it was a single red rose.

Orion arrived from Tennessee, and the brothers took their sorrowful burden to St. Louis, subsequently to Hannibal, his old home. The death of this lovely boy was a heavy sorrow to the community where he was known, for he had been a favorite with all.[1]

From Hannibal the family returned to Pamela's home in St. Louis. There one night Orion heard his brother moaning and grieving and walking the floor of his room. By and by Sam came in to where Orion was. He could endure it no longer, he said; he must "tell somebody."

[1] For a fine characterization of Henry Clemens the reader is referred to a letter written by Orion Clemens to Miss Wood. See Appendix A, at the end of the last volume.

Then he poured all the story of that last tragic night. It has been set down here because it accounts for much in his after-life. It magnified his natural compassion for the weakness and blunders of humanity, while it increased the poor opinion implanted by the Scotchman Macfarlane of the human being as a divine invention. Two of Mark Twain's chief characteristics were—consideration for the human species, and contempt for it.

In many ways he never overcame the tragedy of Henry's death. He never really looked young again. Gray hairs had come, as he said, and they did not disappear. His face took on the serious, pathetic look which from that time it always had in repose. At twenty-three he looked thirty. At thirty he looked nearer forty. After that the discrepancy in age and looks became less notable. In vigor, complexion, and temperament he was regarded in later life as young for his years, but never in looks.

XXVII

THE PILOT

THE young pilot returned to the river as steersman for George Ealer, whom he loved, and in September of that year obtained a full license as Mississippi River pilot.[1] Bixby had returned by this time, and they were again together, first on the *Crescent City*, later on a fine new boat called the *New Falls City*. Clemens was still a steersman when Bixby returned; but as soon as his license was granted (September 9, 1858) his old chief took him as full partner.

He was a pilot at last. In eighteen months he had packed away in his head all the multitude of volatile statistics and acquired that confidence and courage which made him one of the elect, a river sovereign. He knew every snag and bank and dead tree and reef in all those endless miles between St. Louis and New Orleans, every cut-off and current, every depth of water—the whole story—by night and by day. He could smell danger in the dark; he could read the surface of the water as an open page. At twenty-three he had acquired a profession which surpassed all others for absolute sovereignty and yielded an income equal to that then earned by the Vice-President of the United States. Boys generally finish college at about that age, but it is not likely that any boy ever finished college with the mass of practical in-

[1] In *Life on the Mississippi* he gives his period of learning at from two to two and a half years; but documentary evidence as well as Mr. Bixby's testimony places the apprenticeship at eighteen months.

formation and training that was stored away in Samuel Clemens's head, or with his knowledge of human nature, his preparation for battle with the world.

"Not only was he a pilot, but a good one." These are Horace Bixby's words, and he added:

"It is the fashion to-day to disparage Sam's piloting. Men who were born since he was on the river and never saw him will tell you that Sam was never much of a pilot. Most of them will tell you that he was never a pilot at all. As a matter of fact, Sam was a fine pilot, and in a day when piloting on the Mississippi required a great deal more brains and skill and application than it does now. There were no signal-lights along the shore in those days, and no search-lights on the vessels; everything was blind, and on a dark, misty night in a river full of snags and shifting sand-bars and changing shores, a pilot's judgment had to be founded on *absolute certainty*."

He had plenty of money now. He could help his mother with a liberal hand, and he did it. He helped Orion, too, with money and with advice. From a letter written toward the end of the year, we gather the new conditions. Orion would seem to have been lamenting over prospects, and the young pilot, strong and exalted in his new estate, urges him to renewed consistent effort:

> What is a government without energy? [he says]. And what is *a man* without energy? Nothing—nothing at all. What is the grandest thing in "Paradise Lost"—the Arch-Fiend's terrible energy! What was the greatest feature in Napoleon's character? His unconquerable energy! Sum all the gifts that man is endowed with, and we give our greatest share of admiration to his energy. And to-day, if I were a heathen, I would rear a statue to Energy, and fall down and worship it!
>
> I want a man to—I want *you* to—take up a line of action, and *follow* it out, in spite of the very devil.

Orion and his wife had returned to Keokuk by this time, waiting for something in the way of a business opportunity.

His pilot brother wrote him more than once letters of encouragement and counsel. Here and there he refers to the tragedy of Henry's death, and the shadow it has cast upon his life; but he was young, he was successful, his spirits were naturally exuberant. In the exhilaration of youth and health and success he finds vent at times in that natural human outlet, self-approval. He not only exhibits this weakness, but confesses it with characteristic freedom.

Putting all things together, I begin to think I am rather lucky than otherwise—a notion which I was slow to take up. The other night I was about to "round to" for a storm, but concluded that I could find a smoother bank somewhere. I landed five miles below. The storm came, passed away and did not injure us. Coming up, day before yesterday, I looked at the spot I first chose, and half the trees on the bank were torn to shreds. We couldn't have lived 5 minutes in such a tornado. And I am also lucky in having a berth, while all the other young pilots are idle. This is the luckiest circumstance that ever befell me. Not on account of the wages—for that is a secondary consideration—but from the fact that the *City of Memphis* is the largest boat in the trade, and the hardest to pilot, and consequently I can get a *reputation* on her, which is a thing I never could accomplish on a transient boat. I can "bank" in the neighborhood of $100 a month on her, and that will satisfy me for the present (principally because the other youngsters are *sucking their fingers*). Bless me! what a pleasure there is in revenge!—and what vast respect Prosperity commands! Why, six months ago, I could enter the "Rooms," and receive only the customary fraternal greeting—now they say, "Why, how *are* you, old fellow—when did you get in?"

And the young pilots who use to tell me, patronizingly, that I could never learn the river cannot keep from showing a little of their chagrin at seeing me so far ahead of them. Permit me to "blow my horn," for I derive a *living* pleasure from these things, and I must confess that when I go to pay my dues, I rather like to let the d—d rascals get a glimpse of a hundred-dollar bill peeping out from amongst notes of smaller dimensions

whose face I do *not* exhibit! You will despise this egotism, but I tell you there is a "stern joy" in it.

We are dwelling on this period of Mark Twain's life, for it was a period that perhaps more than any other influenced his future years. He became completely saturated with the river—its terms, its memories, its influence remained a definite factor in his personality to the end of his days. Moreover, it was his first period of great triumph. Where before he had been a subaltern—not always even a wage-earner—now all in a moment he had been transformed into a high chief. The fullest ambition of his childhood had been realized—more than realized, for in that day he had never dreamed of a boat or of an income of such stately proportions. Of great personal popularity, and regarded as a safe pilot, he had been given one of the largest, most difficult of boats. Single-handed and alone he had fought his way into the company of kings.

And we may pardon his vanity. He could hardly fail to feel his glory and revel in it and wear it as a halo, perhaps, a little now and then in the Association Rooms. To this day he is remembered as a figure there, though we may believe, regardless of his own statement, that it was not entirely because of his success. As the boys of Hannibal had gathered around to listen when Sam Clemens began to speak, so we may be certain that the pilots at St. Louis and New Orleans laid aside other things when he had an observation to make or a tale to tell.

He was much given to spinning yarns [writes one associate of those days] so funny that his hearers were convulsed, and yet all the time his own face was perfectly sober. If he laughed at all, it must have been inside. It would have killed his hearers to do that. Occasionally some of his droll yarns would get into the papers. He may have written them himself.

Another riverman of those days has recalled a story he heard Sam Clemens tell:

We were speaking of presence of mind in accidents—we were always talking of such things; then he said:

"Boys, I had great presence of mind once. It was at a fire. An old man leaned out of a four-story building calling for help. Everybody in the crowd below looked up, but nobody did anything. The ladders weren't long enough. Nobody had any presence of mind—nobody but me. I came to the rescue. I yelled for a rope. When it came I threw the old man the end of it. He caught it and I told him to tie it around his waist. He did so, and I pulled him down."

This was one of the stories that got into print and traveled far. Perhaps, as the old pilot suggests, he wrote some of them himself, for Horace Bixby remembers that "Sam was always scribbling when not at the wheel."

But if he published any work in those river-days he did not acknowledge it later—with one exception. The exception was not intended for publication, either. It was a burlesque written for the amusement of his immediate friends. He has told the story himself, more than once, but it belongs here for the reason that somewhere out of the general circumstance of it there originated a pseudonym, one day to become the best-known in the hemispheres—the name Mark Twain.

That terse, positive, peremptory, dynamic pen-name was first used by an old pilot named Isaiah Sellers—a sort of "oldest inhabitant" of the river, who made the other pilots weary with the scope and antiquity of his reminiscent knowledge. He contributed paragraphs of general information and Nestorian opinions to the New Orleans *Picayune*, and signed them "Mark Twain." They were quaintly egotistical in tone, usually beginning "My opinion for the benefit of the citizens of New Orleans," and reciting incidents and comparisons dating as far back as 1811.

Captain Sellers naturally was regarded as fair game by the young pilots, who amused themselves by imitating his manner and general attitude of speech. But Clemens went further; he wrote at considerable length a broadly burlesque imitation signed "Sergeant Fathom," with an introduction which referred to the said Fathom as "one of the oldest cub pilots on the river." The letter that followed related a perfectly impossible trip, supposed to have been made in 1763 by the steamer "the old first *Jubilee*" with a "Chinese captain and a Choctaw crew." It is a gem of its kind, and will bear reprint in full today.[1]

The burlesque delighted Bart Bowen, who was Clemens's pilot partner on the *Edward J. Gay* at the time. He insisted on showing it to others and finally upon printing it. Clemens was reluctant, but consented. It appeared in the *True Delta* (May 8 or 9, 1859), and was widely and boisterously enjoyed.

It broke Captain Sellers's literary heart. He never contributed another paragraph. Mark Twain always regretted the whole matter deeply, and his own revival of the name was a sort of tribute to the old man he had thoughtlessly wounded. If Captain Sellers has knowledge of material matters now, he is probably satisfied; for these things brought to him, and to the name he had chosen, what he could never himself have achieved—immortality.

[1] See Appendix B, at the end of the last volume.

XXVIII

PILOTING AND PROPHECY

THOSE who knew Samuel Clemens best in those days say that he was a slender, fine-looking man, well dressed—even dandified—given to patent leathers, blue serge, white duck, and fancy striped shirts. Old for his years, he heightened his appearance at times by wearing his beard in the atrocious mutton-chop fashion, then popular, but becoming to no one, least of all to him. The pilots regarded him as a great reader—a student of history, travels, literature, and the sciences—a young man whom it was an education as well as an entertainment to know. When not at the wheel, he was likely to be reading or telling yarns in the Association Rooms.

He began the study of French one day when he passed a school of languages, where three tongues, French, German, and Italian, were taught, one in each of three rooms. The price was twenty-five dollars for one language, or three for fifty dollars. The student was provided with a set of cards for each room and supposed to walk from one apartment to another, changing tongues at each threshold. With his unusual enthusiasm and prodigality, the young pilot decided to take all three languages, but after the first two or three round trips concluded that for the present French would do. He did not return to the school, but kept his cards and bought text-books. He must have studied pretty faithfully when he was off watch and in port, for his river note-book contains a French exercise, all neatly written, and it is from the Dialogues of Voltaire.

This old note-book is interesting for other things. The notes are no longer timid, hesitating memoranda, but vigorous records made with the dash of assurance that comes from confidence and knowledge, and with the authority of one in supreme command. Under the head of "*2d high-water trip—Jan., 1861—Alonzo Child*," we have the story of a rising river with its overflowing banks, its blind passages and cut-offs—all the circumstance and uncertainty of change.

Good deal of water all over Coles Creek Chute, 12 or 15 ft. bank—could have gone up shore above General Taylor's—too much drift. . . .

Night—didn't run either 77 or 76 towheads—8 ft. bank on main shore Ozark Chute—

And so on page after page of cryptographic memoranda. It means little enough to the lay reader, yet one gets an impression somehow of the swirling, turbulent water and a lonely figure in that high glassed-in place peering into the dark for blind land-marks and possible dangers, picking his way up the dim, hungry river of which he must know every foot as well as a man knows the hall of his own home. All the qualifications must come into play, then: memory, judgment, courage, and the high art of steering. "Steering is a very high art," he says; "one must not keep a rudder dragging across a boat's stern if he wants to get up the river fast."

He had an example of the perfection of this art one misty night on the *Alonzo Child*. Nearly fifty years later, sitting on his veranda in the dark, he recalled it. He said:

"There was a pilot in those days by the name of Jack Leonard who was a perfectly wonderful creature. I do not know that Jack knew any more about the river than most of us and perhaps could not read the water any better, but he had a knack of steering away ahead of our

ability, and I think he must have had an eye that could see farther into the darkness.

"I had never seen Leonard steer, but I had heard a good deal about it. I had heard it said that the crankiest old tub afloat—one that would kill any other man to handle—would obey and be as docile as a child when Jack Leonard took the wheel. I had a chance one night to verify that for myself. We were going up the river, and it was one of the nastiest nights I ever saw. Besides that, the boat was loaded in such a way that she steered very hard, and I was half blind and crazy trying to locate the safe channel, and was pulling my arms out to keep her in it. It was one of those nights when everything looks the same whichever way you look: just two long lines where the sky comes down to the trees and where the trees meet the water with all the trees precisely the same height—all planted on the same day, as one of the boys used to put it—and not a thing to steer by except the knowledge in your head of the real shape of the river. Some of the boats had what they call a 'night hawk' on the jack-staff, a thing which you could see when it was in the right position against the sky or the water, though it seldom *was* in the right position and was generally pretty useless.

"I was in a bad way that night and wondering how I could ever get through it, when the pilot-house door opened, and Jack Leonard walked in. He was a passenger that trip, and I had forgotten he was aboard. I was just about in the worst place and was pulling the boat first one way, then another, running the wheel backward and forward, and climbing it like a squirrel.

"'Sam,' he said, 'let me take the wheel. Maybe I have been over this place since you have.'

"I didn't argue the question. Jack took the wheel, gave it a little turn one way, then a little turn the other; that old boat settled down as quietly as a lamb—went right along as if it had been broad daylight in a river

without snags, bars, bottom, or banks, or anything that one could possibly hit. I never saw anything so beautiful. He stayed my watch out for me, and I hope I was decently grateful. I have never forgotten it."

The old note-book contained the record of many such nights as that; but there were other nights, too, when the stars were blazing out, or when the moon on the water made the river a wide mysterious way of speculative dreams. He was always speculating; the planets and the remote suns were always a marvel to him. A love of astronomy—the romance of it, its vast distances, and its possibilities—began with those lonely river-watches and never waned to his last day. For a time a great comet blazed in the heavens, a "wonderful sheaf of light" that glorified his lonely watch. Night after night he watched it as it developed and then grew dim, and he read eagerly all the comet literature that came to his hand, then or afterward. He speculated of many things: of life, death, the reason of existence, of creation, the ways of Providence and Destiny. It was a fruitful time for such meditation; out of such vigils grew those larger philosophies that would find expression later, when the years had conferred the magic gift of phrase.

Life lay all ahead of him then, and during those still watches he must have revolved many theories of how the future should be met and mastered. In the old note-book there still remains a well-worn clipping, the words of some unknown writer, which he had preserved and may have consulted as a sort of creed. It is an interesting little document—a prophetic one, the reader may concede:

How to Take Life.—Take it just as though it was—as it is—an earnest, vital, and important affair. Take it as though you were born to the task of performing a merry part in it—as though the world had awaited for your coming. Take it as though it was a grand opportunity to do and achieve, to carry

forward great and good schemes; to help and cheer a suffering, weary, it may be heartbroken, brother. Now and then a man stands aside from the crowd, labors earnestly, steadfastly, confidently, and straightway becomes famous for wisdom, intellect, skill, greatness of some sort. The world wonders, admires, idolizes, and it only illustrates what others may do if they take hold of life with a purpose. The miracle, or the power that elevates the few, is to be found in their industry, application, and perseverance under the promptings of a brave, determined spirit.

The old note-book contains no record of disasters. Horace Bixby, who should know, has declared:

"Sam Clemens never had an accident either as a steersman or as a pilot, except once when he got aground for a few hours in the *bagasse* (cane) smoke, with no damage to anybody—though of course there was some good luck in that too, for the best pilots do not escape trouble, now and then."

Bixby and Clemens were together that winter on the *Alonzo Child*, and a letter to Orion contains an account of great feasting which the two enjoyed at a "French restaurant" in New Orleans—"dissipating on a ten-dollar dinner—tell it not to Ma!"—where they had sheepshead fish, oysters, birds, mushrooms, and what not, "after which the day was too far gone to do anything." So it appears that he was not always reading Macaulay or studying French and astronomy, but sometimes went frivoling with his old chief, now his chum, always his dear friend.

Another letter records a visit with Pamela to a picture-gallery in St. Louis where was being exhibited Church's "Heart of the Andes." He describes the picture in detail and with vast enthusiasm.

"I have seen it several times," he concludes, "but it is always a new picture—totally new—you seem to see nothing the second time that you saw the first."

Further along he tells of having taken his mother and the girls—his cousin Ella Creel and another—for a trip down the river to New Orleans.

Ma was delighted with her trip, but she was disgusted with the girls for allowing me to embrace and kiss them—and she was horrified at the *schottische* as performed by Miss Castle and myself. She was perfectly willing for me to dance until 12 o'clock at the imminent peril of my going to sleep on the after-watch—but then she would top off with a very inconsistent sermon on dancing in general; ending with a terrific broadside aimed at that heresy of heresies, the *schottische*.

I took Ma and the girls in a carriage round that portion of New Orleans where the finest gardens and residences are to be seen, and, although it was a blazing hot, dusty day, they seemed hugely delighted. To use an expression which is commonly ignored in polite society, they were "hell-bent" on stealing some of the luscious-looking oranges from branches which overhung the fence, but I restrained them.

In another letter of this period we get a hint of the future Mark Twain. It was written to John T. Moore, a young clerk on the *John J. Roe*.

What a fool old Adam was. Had everything his own way; had succeeded in gaining the love of the best-looking girl in the neighborhood, but yet, unsatisfied with his conquest, he had to eat a miserable little apple. Ah, John, if you had been in his place you would not have eaten a mouthful of the apple—that is, if it had required any exertion. I have noticed that you shun exertion. *There* comes in the difference between us. I court exertion. I love work. Why, sir, when I have a piece of work to perform, I go away to myself, sit down in the shade, and muse over the coming enjoyment. Sometimes I am so industrious that I muse too long.

There remains another letter of this period—a sufficiently curious document. There was in those days a famous New Orleans clairvoyant known as Madame Caprell. Some of the young pilot's friends had visited

her and obtained what seemed to be satisfying results. From time to time they had urged him to visit the fortune-teller, and one idle day he concluded to make the experiment. As soon as he came away he wrote to Orion in detail.

She's a very pleasant little lady—rather pretty—about 28—say 5 feet 2¼—would weigh 116—has black eyes and hair—is polite and intelligent—used good language, and talks much faster than I do.

She invited me into the little back parlor, closed the door; and we were alone. We sat down facing each other. Then she asked my age. Then she put her hands before her eyes a moment, and commenced talking as if she had a good deal to say and not much time to say it in. Something after this style:

Madame. Yours is a watery planet; you gain your livelihood on the water; but you should have been a lawyer—there is where your talents lie; you might have distinguished yourself as an orator, or as an editor; you have written a great deal; you write well—but you are rather out of practice; no matter—you will be *in* practice some day; you have a superb constitution, and as excellent health as any man in the world; you have great powers of endurance; in your profession your strength holds out against the longest sieges without flagging; still, the upper part of your lungs, the top of them, is slightly affected—you must take care of yourself; you do not drink, but you use *entirely* too much tobacco; and you must stop it; mind, not moderate, but *stop* the use of it, totally; then I can almost promise you 86, when you will surely die; otherwise, look out for 28, 31, 34, 47, and 65; be careful—for you are not of a long-lived race, that is, on your *father's* side; you are the only healthy member of your family, and the only one in it who has anything like the certainty of attaining to a great age—so, stop using tobacco, and be careful of yourself. . . . In some respects you take after your father, but you are much *more* like your mother, who belongs to the long-lived, energetic side of the house. . . . You never brought all your energies to bear upon any subject but what you accomplished it—for instance, you are self-made, self-educated.

S. L. C. Which proves nothing.

Madame. Don't interrupt. When you sought your present occupation, you found a thousand obstacles in your way—obstacles unknown—not even suspected by any save you and me, since you keep such matter to yourself—but you fought your way, and hid the long struggle under a mask of cheerfulness, which saved your friends anxiety on your account. To do all this requires the qualities which I have named.

S. L. C. You flatter well, Madame.

Madame. Don't interrupt. Up to within a short time you had always lived from hand to mouth—now you are in easy circumstances—for which you need give credit to no one but yourself. The turning-point in your life occurred in 1840–7–8.

S. L. C. Which was?

Madame. A death, perhaps, and this threw you upon the world and made you what you are; it was always intended that you should make yourself; therefore, it was well that this calamity occurred as early as it did. You will never die of water, although your career upon it in the future seems well sprinkled with misfortune. You will continue upon the water for some time yet; you will not retire finally until ten years from now. . . . What is your brother's age? 35—and a lawyer?—and in pursuit of an office? Well, he stands a better chance than the other two, and he *may* get it; he is too visionary—is always flying off on a new hobby; this will never do—tell him I said so. He is a good lawyer—a *very* good lawyer—and a fine speaker—is very popular and much respected, and makes many friends; but although he retains their friendship, he loses their confidence by displaying his instability of character. . . . The land he has now will be very valuable after a while—

S. L. C. Say 250 years hence, or thereabouts, Madame—

Madame. No—less time—but never mind the land, that is a secondary consideration—let him drop that for the present, and devote himself to his business and politics with all his might, for he must hold offices under Government. . . .

After a while you will possess a good deal of property—retire at the end of ten years—after which your pursuits will be literary—try the law—you will certainly succeed. I am done now. If you have any questions to ask—ask them freely—and if it be in my power, I will answer without reserve—without reserve.

I asked a few questions of minor importance—paid her $2

and left—under the decided impression that going to the fortune-teller's was just as good as going to the opera, and cost scarcely a trifle more—*ergo*, I will disguise myself and go again, one of these days, when other amusements fail. Now isn't she the devil? That is to say, isn't she a right smart little woman?

When you want money, let Ma know, and she will send it. She and Pamela are always fussing about change, so I sent them a hundred and twenty quarters yesterday — fiddler's change enough to last till I get back, I reckon.

SAM.

In the light of preceding and subsequent events, we must confess that Madame Caprell was "indeed a right smart little woman." She made mistakes enough (the letter is not quoted in full), but when we remember that she not only gave his profession at the moment, but at least suggested his career for the future; that she approximated the year of his father's death as the time when he was thrown upon the world; that she admonished him against his besetting habit, tobacco; that she read minutely not only his characteristics, but his brother Orion's; that she outlined the struggle in his conquest of the river; that she seemingly had knowledge of Orion's legal bent and his connection with the Tennessee land, all seems remarkable enough, supposing, of course, she had no material means of acquiring knowledge—one can never know certainly about such things.

XXIX

THE END OF PILOTING

IT is curious, however, that Madame Caprell, with clairvoyant vision, should not have seen an important event then scarcely more than two months distant: the breaking-out of the Civil War, with the closing of the river and the end of Mark Twain's career as a pilot. Perhaps these things were so near as to be "this side" the range of second sight.

There had been plenty of war-talk, but few of the pilots believed that war was really coming. Traveling that great commercial highway, the river, with intercourse both of North and South, they did not believe that any political differences would be allowed to interfere with the nation's trade, or would be settled otherwise than on the street corners, in the halls of legislation, and at the polls. True, several States, including Louisiana, had declared the Union a failure and seceded; but the majority of opinions were not clear as to how far a State had rights in such a matter, or as to what the real meaning of secession might be. Comparatively few believed it meant war. Samuel Clemens had no such belief. His Madame Caprell letter bears date of February 6, 1861, yet contains no mention of war or of any special excitement in New Orleans—no forebodings as to national conditions.

Such things came soon enough: President Lincoln was inaugurated on the 4th of March, and six weeks later Fort Sumter was fired upon. Men began to speak out then and to take sides.

It was a momentous time in the Association Rooms. There were pilots who would go with the Union; there were others who would go with the Confederacy. Horace Bixby was one of the former, and in due time became chief of the Union River Service. Another pilot named Montgomery (Samuel Clemens had once steered for him) declared for the South, and later commanded the Confederate Mississippi fleet. They were all good friends, and their discussions, though warm, were not always acrimonious; but they took sides.

A good many were not very clear as to their opinions. Living both North and South as they did, they saw various phases of the question and divided their sympathies. Some were of one conviction one day and of another the next. Samuel Clemens was of the less radical element. He knew there was a good deal to be said for either cause; furthermore, he was not then bloodthirsty. A pilot-house with its elevated position and transparency seemed a poor place to be in when fighting was going on.

"I'll think about it," he said. "I'm not very anxious to get up into a glass perch and be shot at by either side. I'll go home and reflect on the matter."

He did not realize it, but he had made his last trip as a pilot. It is rather curious that his final brief note-book entry should begin with his future nom de plume—a memorandum of soundings—"mark twain," and should end with the words "no lead."

He went up the river as a passenger on a steamer named the *Uncle Sam*. Zeb Leavenworth was one of the pilots, and Sam Clemens usually stood watch with him. They heard war-talk all the way and saw preparations, but they were not molested, though at Memphis they barely escaped the blockade. At Cairo, Illinois, they saw soldiers drilling—troops later commanded by Grant. The *Uncle Sam* came steaming up toward St. Louis, those on board congratulating themselves on having come

through unscathed. They were not quite through, however. Abreast of Jefferson Barracks they suddenly heard the boom of a cannon and saw a great whorl of smoke drifting in their direction. They did not realize that it was a signal—a thunderous halt—and kept straight on. Less than a minute later there was another boom, and a shell exploded directly in front of the pilot-house, breaking a lot of glass and destroying a good deal of the upper decoration. Zeb Leavenworth fell back into a corner with a yell.

"Good Lord Almighty! Sam," he said, "what do they mean by that?"

Clemens stepped to the wheel and brought the boat around. "I guess they want us to wait a minute, Zeb," he said.

They were examined and passed. It was the last steamboat to make the trip from New Orleans to St. Louis. Mark Twain's pilot-days were over. He would have grieved had he known this fact.

"I loved the profession far better than any I have followed since," he long afterward declared, "and I took a measureless pride in it."

The dreamy, easy, romantic existence suited him exactly. A sovereign and an autocrat, the pilot's word was law; he wore his responsibilities as a crown. As long as he lived Samuel Clemens would return to those old days with fondness and affection, and with regret that they were no more.

XXX

THE SOLDIER

CLEMENS spent a few days in St. Louis (in retirement, for there was a pressing war demand for Mississippi pilots), then went up to Hannibal to visit old friends. They were glad enough to see him, and invited him to join a company of gay military enthusiasts who were organizing to "help Gov. 'Claib' Jackson repel the invader." A good many companies were forming in and about Hannibal, and sometimes purposes were conflicting and badly mixed. Some of the volunteers did not know for a time which invader they intended to drive from Missouri soil, and more than one company in the beginning was made up of young fellows whose chief ambition was to have a lark regardless as to which cause they might eventually espouse.[1]

Samuel Clemens had by this time decided, like Lee, that he would go with his State and lead battalions to

[1] The military organizations of Hannibal and Palmyra, in 1861, were as follows: The Marion Artillery; the Silver Grays; Palmyra Guards; the W. E. Dennis company, and one or two others. Most of them were small private affairs, usually composed of about half-and-half Union and Confederate men, who knew almost nothing of the questions or conditions, and disbanded in a brief time, to attach themselves to the regular service according as they developed convictions. The general idea of these companies was a little camping-out expedition and a good time. One such company one morning received unexpected reinforcements. They saw the approach of the recruits, and, remarking how well drilled the new arrivals seemed to be, mistook them for the enemy and fled.

victory. The "battalion" in this instance consisted of a little squad of young fellows of his own age, mostly pilots and schoolmates, including Sam Bowen, Ed Stevens, and Ab Grimes, about a dozen, all told. They organized secretly, for the Union militia was likely to come over from Illinois any time and lock up any suspicious armies that made an open demonstration. An army might lose enthusiasm and prestige if it spent a night or two in the calaboose.

So they met in a secret place above Bear Creek Hill, just as Tom Sawyer's red-handed bandits had gathered so long before (a good many of them were of the same lawless lot), and they planned how they would sell their lives on the field of glory, just as Tom Sawyer's band might have done if it had thought about playing "War," instead of "Indian" and "Pirate" and "Bandit" with fierce raids on peach orchards and melon patches. Then, on the evening before marching away, they stealthily called on their sweethearts—those who had them did, and the others pretended sweethearts for the occasion—and when it was dark and mysterious they said good-by and suggested that maybe those girls would never see them again. And as always happens in such a case, some of them were in earnest, and two or three of the little group that slipped away that night never did come back, and somewhere sleep in unmarked graves.

The "two Sams"—Sam Bowen and Sam Clemens—called on Patty Gore and Julia Willis for their good-by visit, and, when they left, invited the girls to "walk through the pickets" with them, which they did as far as Bear Creek Hill. The girls didn't notice any pickets, because the pickets were away calling on girls, too, and probably wouldn't be back to begin picketing for some time. So the girls stood there and watched the soldiers march up Bear Creek Hill and disappear among the trees.

The army had a good enough time that night, marching

through the brush and vines toward New London, though this sort of thing grew rather monotonous by morning. When they took a look at themselves by daylight, with their nondescript dress and accoutrements, there was something about it all which appealed to one's sense of humor rather than to his patriotism. Colonel Ralls, of Ralls County, however, received them cordially and made life happier for them with a good breakfast and some encouraging words. He was authorized to administer the oath of office, he said, and he proceeded to do it, and made them a speech besides; also he sent out notice to some of the neighbors—to Col. Bill Splawn, Farmer Nuck Matson, and others—that the community had an army on its hands and perhaps ought to do something for it. This brought in a number of contributions, provisions, paraphernalia, and certain superfluous horses and mules, which converted the battalion into a cavalry, and made it possible for it to move on to the front without further delay. Samuel Clemens, mounted on a small yellow mule whose tail had been trimmed down to a tassel at the end in a style that suggested his name, Paint Brush, upholstered and supplemented with an extra pair of cowskin boots, a pair of gray blankets, a home-made quilt, frying-pan, a carpet-sack, a small valise, an overcoat, an old-fashioned Kentucky rifle, twenty yards of rope, and an umbrella, was a representative unit of the brigade. The proper thing for an army loaded like that was to go into camp, and they did it. They went over on Salt River, near Florida, and camped not far from a farm-house with a big log stable; the latter they used as headquarters. Somebody suggested that when they went into battle they ought to have short hair, so that in a hand-to-hand conflict the enemy could not get hold of it. Tom Lyon found a pair of sheep-shears in the stable and acted as barber. They were not very sharp shears, but the army stood the torture for glory in the field, and a group of little darkies

collected from the farm-house to enjoy the performance. The army then elected its officers. William Ely was chosen captain, with Asa Glasscock as first lieutenant. Samuel Clemens was then voted second lieutenant, and there were sergeants and orderlies. There were only three privates when the election was over, and these could not be distinguished by their deportment. There was scarcely any discipline in this army.

Then it set in to rain. It rained by day and it rained by night. Salt River rose until it was bank full and overflowed the bottoms. Twice there was a false night alarm of the enemy approaching, and the battalion went slopping through the mud and brush into the dark, picking out the best way to retreat, plodding miserably back to camp when the alarm was over. Once they fired a volley at a row of mullen stalks, waving on the brow of a hill, and once a picket shot at his own horse that had got loose and had wandered toward him in the dusk.

The rank and file did not care for picket duty. Sam Bowen—ordered by Lieutenant Clemens to go on guard one afternoon—denounced his superior and had to be threatened with court-martial and death. Sam went finally, but he sat in a hot open place and swore at the battalion and the war in general, and finally went to sleep in the broiling sun. These things began to tell on patriotism. Presently Lieutenant Clemens developed a boil, and was obliged to make himself comfortable with some hay in a horse-trough, where he lay most of the day, violently denouncing the war and the fools that invented it. Then word came that "General" Tom Harris, who was in command of the district, was stopping at a farm-house two miles away, living on the fat of the land.

That settled it. Most of them knew Tom Harris, and they regarded his neglect of them as perfidy. They broke camp without further ceremony.

Lieutenant Clemens needed assistance to mount Paint

Brush, and the little mule refused to cross the river; so Ab Grimes took the coil of rope, hitched one end of it to his own saddle and the other end to Paint Brush's neck. Grimes was mounted on a big horse, and when he started it was necessary for Paint Brush to follow. Arriving at the farther bank, Grimes looked around, and was horrified to see that the end of the rope led down in the water with no horse and rider in view. He spurred up the bank, and the hat of Lieutenant Clemens and the ears of Paint Brush appeared.

"Ab," said Clemens, as he mopped his face, "do you know that little devil *waded* all the way across?"

A little beyond the river they met General Harris, who ordered them back to camp. They admonished him to "go there himself." They said they had been in that camp and knew all about it. They were going now where there was food—real food and plenty of it. Then he begged them, but it was no use. By and by they stopped at a farm-house for supplies. A tall, bony woman came to the door:

"You're secesh, ain't you?"

They acknowledged that they were defenders of the cause and that they wanted to buy provisions. The request seemed to inflame her.

"Provisions!" she screamed. "Provisions for secesh, and my husband a colonel in the Union Army. You get out of here!"

She reached for a hickory hoop-pole that stood by the door, and the army moved on. When they arrived at Col. Bill Splawn's that night Colonel Splawn and his family had gone to bed, and it seemed unwise to disturb them. The hungry army camped in the barnyard and crept into the hay-loft to sleep. Presently somebody yelled "Fire!" One of the boys had been smoking and started the hay. Lieutenant Clemens suddenly wakened, made a quick rolling movement from the blaze, and rolled out of a big

hay-window into the barnyard below. The rest of the army, startled into action, seized the burning hay and pitched it out of the same window. The lieutenant had sprained his ankle when he struck the ground, and his boil was far from well, but when the burning hay descended he forgot his disabilities. Literally and figuratively this was the final straw. With a voice and vigor suited to the urgencies of the case, he made a spring from under the burning stuff, flung off the remnants, and with them his last vestige of interest in the war. The others, now that the fire was out, seemed to think the incident boisterously amusing. Whereupon the lieutenant rose up and told them, collectively and individually, what he thought of them; also he spoke of the war and the Confederacy, and of the human race at large. They helped him in, then, for his ankle was swelling badly. Next morning, when Colonel Splawn had given them a good breakfast, the army set out for New London.

But Lieutenant Clemens never got any farther than Nuck Matson's farm-house. His ankle was so painful by that time that Mrs. Matson had him put to bed, where he stayed for several weeks, recovering from the injury and stress of war. A little negro boy was kept on watch for Union detachments—they were passing pretty frequently now—and when one came in sight the lieutenant was secluded until the danger passed. When he was able to travel, he had had enough of war and the Confederacy. He decided to visit Orion in Keokuk. Orion was a Union abolitionist and might lead him to mend his doctrines.

As for the rest of the army, it was no longer a unit in the field. Its members had drifted this way and that, some to return to their occupations, some to continue in the trade of war. Sam Bowen is said to have been caught by the Federal troops and put to sawing wood in the stockade at Hannibal. Ab (A. C.) Grimes became a noted Confederate spy and is still among those who have

lived to furnish the details here set down. Properly officered and disciplined, that detachment would have made as brave soldiers as any. Military effectiveness is a matter of leaders and tactics.

Mark Twain's own *Private History of a Campaign that Failed* is, of course, built on this episode. He gives us a delicious account, even if it does not strikingly resemble the occurrence. The story might have been still better if he had not introduced the shooting of the soldier in the dark The incident was invented, of course, to present the real horror of war, but it seems incongruous in this burlesque campaign, and, to some extent at least, it missed fire in its intention.[1]

[1] In a book recently published, Mark Twain's "nephew" is quoted as authority for the statement that Mark Twain was detailed for river duty, captured, and paroled, captured again, and confined in a tobacco-warehouse in St. Louis, etc. Mark Twain had but one nephew: Samuel E. Moffett, whose *Biographical Sketch* (vol. xxii, Mark Twain's Works) contains no such statement; and nothing of the sort occurred.

XXXI

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

WHEN Madame Caprell prophesied that Orion Clemens would hold office under government, she must have seen with true clairvoyant vision. The inauguration of Abraham Lincoln brought Edward Bates into his Cabinet, and Bates was Orion's friend. Orion applied for something, and got it. James W. Nye had been appointed Territorial governor of Nevada, and Orion was made Territorial secretary. You could strain a point and refer to the office as "secretary of state," which was an imposing title. Furthermore, the secretary would be acting governor in the governor's absence, and there would be various subsidiary honors. When Lieutenant Clemens arrived in Keokuk, Orion was in the first flush of his triumph and needed only money to carry him to the scene of new endeavor. The late lieutenant C. S. A. had accumulated money out of his pilot salary, and there was no comfortable place just then in the active Middle West for an officer of either army who had voluntarily retired from the service. He agreed that if Orion would overlook his recent brief defection from the Union and appoint him now as his (Orion's) secretary, he would supply the funds for both overland passages, and they would start with no unnecessary delay for a country so new that all human beings, regardless of previous affiliations and convictions, were flung into the common fusing-pot and recast in the general mold of pioneer.

The offer was a boon to Orion. He was always eager

to forgive, and the money was vitally necessary. In the briefest possible time he had packed his belongings, which included a large unabridged dictionary, and the brothers were on their way to St. Louis for final leave-taking before setting out for the great mysterious land of promise—the Pacific West. From St. Louis they took the boat for St. Jo, whence the Overland stage started, and for six days "plodded" up the shallow, muddy, snaggy Missouri, a new experience for the pilot of the Father of Waters.

> In fact, the boat might almost as well have gone to St. Jo by land, for she was walking most of the time, anyhow—climbing over reefs and clambering over snags patiently and laboriously all day long. The captain said she was a "bully" boat, and all she wanted was some "shear" and a bigger wheel. I thought she wanted a pair of stilts, but I had the deep sagacity not to say so.[1]

At St. Jo they paid one hundred and fifty dollars apiece for their stage fare (with something extra for the dictionary), and on the twenty-sixth of July, 1861, set out on that long, delightful trip behind sixteen galloping horses—or mules—never stopping except for meals or to change teams, heading steadily into the sunset, following it from horizon to horizon over the billowy plains, across the snow-clad Rockies, covering the seventeen hundred miles between St. Jo and Carson City (including a two-day halt in Salt Lake City) in nineteen glorious days. What an inspiration in such a trip! In *Roughing It* he tells it all, and says: "Even at this day it thrills me through and through to think of the life, the gladness, and the wild sense of freedom that used to make the blood dance in my face on those fine Overland mornings."

The nights, with the uneven mail-bags for a bed and the bounding dictionary for company, were less exhilarating; but then youth does not mind.

[1] *Roughing It.*

All things being now ready, we stowed the uneasy dictionary where it would lie as quiet as possible, and placed the water-canteen and pistols where we could find them in the dark. Then we smoked a final pipe and swapped a final yarn; after which we put the pipes, tobacco, and bag of coin in snug holes and caves among the mail-bags, and made the place as dark as the inside of a cow, as the conductor phrased it in his picturesque way. It was certainly as dark as any place could be—nothing was even dimly visible in it. And finally we rolled ourselves up like silkworms, each person in his own blanket, and sank peacefully to sleep.

Youth loves that sort of thing, despite its inconvenience. And sometimes the clatter of the pony-rider swept by in the night, carrying letters at five dollars apiece and making the Overland trip in eight days; just a quick beat of hoofs in the distance, a dash, and a hail from the darkness, the beat of hoofs again, then only the rumble of the stage and the even, swinging gallop of the mules. Sometimes they got a glimpse of the pony-rider by day—a flash, as it were, as he sped by. And every morning brought new scenery, new phases of frontier life, including, at last, what was to them the strangest phase of all, Mormonism.

They spent two wonderful days at Salt Lake City, that mysterious and remote capital of the great American monarchy, who still flaunts her lawless, orthodox creed —the religion of David and Solomon—and thrives. An obliging official made it his business to show them the city and the life there, the result of which would be those amusing chapters in *Roughing It* by and by. The Overland travelers set out refreshed from Salt Lake City, and with a new supply of delicacies—ham, eggs, and tobacco—things that make such a trip worth while. The author of *Roughing It* assures us of this:

Nothing helps scenery like ham and eggs. Ham and eggs, and after these a pipe—an old, rank, delicious pipe—ham and eggs

and scenery, a "down-grade," a flying coach, a fragrant pipe, and a contented heart—these make happiness. It is what all the ages have struggled for.

But one must read all the story of that long-ago trip. It was a trip so well worth taking, so well worth recording, so well worth reading and rereading to-day. We can *only* read of it now. The Overland stage long ago made its last trip, and will not start any more. Even if it did, the life and conditions, the very scenery itself, would not be the same.

XXXII

THE PIONEER

IT was a hot, dusty August 14th that the stage reached Carson City and drew up before the Ormsby Hotel. It was known that the Territorial secretary was due to arrive; and something in the nature of a reception, with refreshments and frontier hospitality, had been planned. Governor Nye, formerly police commissioner in New York City, had arrived a short time before, and with his party of retainers ("heelers" we would call them now), had made an imposing entrance. Perhaps something of the sort was expected with the advent of the secretary of state. Instead, the committee saw two wayworn individuals climb down from the stage, unkempt, unshorn —clothed in the roughest of frontier costume, the same they had put on at St. Jo—dusty, grimy, slouchy, and weather-beaten with long days of sun and storm and alkali desert dust. It is not likely there were two more unprepossessing officials on the Pacific coast at that moment than the newly arrived Territorial secretary and his brother. Somebody identified them, and the committee melted away; the half-formed plan of a banquet faded out and was not heard of again. Soap and water and fresh garments worked a transformation; but that first impression had been fatal to festivities of welcome.

Carson City, the capital of Nevada, was a "wooden town," with a population of two thousand souls. Its main street consisted of a few blocks of small frame

stores, some of which are still standing. In *Roughing It* the author writes:

In the middle of the town, opposite the stores, was a "Plaza," which is native to all towns beyond the Rocky Mountains, a large, unfenced, level vacancy with a Liberty Pole in it, and very useful as a place for public auctions, horse trades, and mass-meetings, and likewise for teamsters to camp in. Two other sides of the Plaza were faced by stores, offices, and stables. The rest of Carson City was pretty scattering.

One sees the place pretty clearly from this brief picture of his, but it requires an extract from a letter written to his mother somewhat later to populate it. The mineral excitement was at its height in those days of the early sixties, and had brought together such a congress of nations as only the greed for precious metal can assemble. The sidewalks and streets of Carson, and the Plaza, thronged all day with a motley aggregation—a museum of races, which it was an education merely to gaze upon. Jane Clemens had required him to write everything just as it was—"no better and no worse."

Well [he says], "Gold Hill" sells at $5,000 per foot, cash down; "Wild Cat" isn't worth ten cents. The country is fabulously rich in gold, silver, copper, lead, coal, iron, quicksilver, marble, granite, chalk, plaster of Paris (gypsum), thieves, murderers, desperadoes, ladies, children, lawyers, Christians, Indians, Chinamen, Spaniards, gamblers, sharpers, coyotes (pronounced ki-yo-ties), poets, preachers, and jackass rabbits. I overheard a gentleman say, the other day, that it was "the d—dest country under the sun," and that comprehensive conception I fully subscribe to. It never rains here, and the dew never falls. No flowers grow here, and no green thing gladdens the eye. The birds that fly over the land carry their provisions with them. Only the crow and the raven tarry with us. Our city lies in the midst of a desert of the purest, most unadulterated and uncompromising *sand*, in which infernal soil nothing but that fag-end of vegetable creation, "sage-brush," ventures to grow.

. . . I said we are situated in a flat, sandy desert—true. And surrounded on all sides by such prodigious mountains that when you look disdainfully down (from them) upon the insignificant village of Carson, in that instant you are seized with a burning desire to stretch forth your hand, put the city in your pocket, and walk off with it.

As to churches, I believe they *have* got a Catholic one here, but, like that one the New York fireman spoke of, I believe "they don't *run* her now."

Carson has been through several phases of change since this was written—for better and for worse. It is a thriving place in these later days, and new farming conditions have improved the country roundabout. But it was a desert outpost then, a catch-all for the human drift which every whirlwind of discovery sweeps along. Gold and silver hunting and mine speculations were the industries—gambling, drinking, and murder were the diversions—of the Nevada capital. Politics developed in due course, though whether as a business or a diversion is not clear at this time.

The Clemens brothers took lodging with a genial Irishwoman, Mrs. Murphy, a New York retainer of Governor Nye, who boarded the camp-followers.[1] This retinue had come in the hope of Territorial pickings and mine adventure—soldiers of fortune they were, and a good-natured lot all together. One of them, Bob Howland, a nephew of the governor, attracted Samuel Clemens by his clean-cut manner and commanding eye.

"The man who has that eye doesn't need to go armed," he wrote later. "He can move upon an armed desperado and quell him and take him a prisoner without saying a single word." It was the same Bob Howland who would be known by and by as the most fearless man in the Territory; who, as city marshal of Aurora, kept that lawless

[1] The Mrs. O'Flannigan of *Roughing It.*

camp in subjection, and, when the friends of a lot of condemned outlaws were threatening an attack with general massacre, sent the famous message to Governor Nye: "All quiet in Aurora. Five men will be hung in an hour." And it *was* quiet, and the programme was carried out. But this is a digression and somewhat premature.

Orion Clemens, anxious for laurels, established himself in the meager fashion which he thought the government would approve; and his brother, finding neither duties nor salary attached to his secondary position, devoted himself mainly to the study of human nature as exhibited under frontier conditions. Sometimes, when the nights were cool, he would build a fire in the office stove, and, with Bob Howland and a few other choice members of the "Brigade" gathered around, would tell river yarns in that inimitable fashion which would win him devoted audiences all his days. His river life had increased his natural languor of habit, and his slow speech heightened the lazy impression which he was never unwilling to convey. His hearers generally regarded him as an easy-going, indolent good fellow with a love of humor—with talent, perhaps—but as one not likely ever to set the world afire. They did not happen to think that the same inclination which made them crowd about to listen and applaud would one day win for him the attention of all mankind.

Within a brief time Sam Clemens (he was never known as otherwise than "Sam" among those pioneers) was about the most conspicuous figure on the Carson streets. His great bushy head of auburn hair, his piercing, twinkling eyes, his loose, lounging walk, his careless disorder of dress, drew the immediate attention even of strangers; made them turn to look a second time and then inquire as to his identity.

He had quickly adapted himself to the frontier mode. Lately a river sovereign and dandy, in fancy percales and patent leathers, he had become the roughest of rough-

clad pioneers, in rusty slouch hat, flannel shirt, coarse trousers slopping half in and half out of the heavy cowskin boots. Always something of a barbarian in love with the loose habit of unconvention, he went even further than others and became a sort of paragon of disarray. The more energetic citizens of Carson did not prophesy much for his future among them. Orion Clemens, with the stir and bustle of the official new broom, earned their quick respect; but his brother—well, they often saw him leaning for an hour or more at a time against an awning support at the corner of King and Carson streets, smoking a short clay pipe and staring drowsily at the human kaleidoscope of the Plaza, scarcely changing his position, just watching, studying, lost in contemplation—all of which was harmless enough, of course, but how could any one ever get a return out of employment like that?

Samuel Clemens did not catch the mining fever immediately; there was too much to see at first to consider any special undertaking. The mere coming to the frontier was for the present enough; he had no plans. His chief purpose was to see the world beyond the Rockies, to derive from it such amusement and profit as might fall in his way. The war would end, by and by, and he would go back to the river, no doubt. He was already not far from homesick for the "States" and his associations there. He closed one letter:

> I heard a military band play "What Are the Wild Waves Saying" the other night, and it brought Ella Creel and Belle (Stotts) across the desert in an instant, for they sang the song in Orion's yard the first time I ever heard it. It was like meeting an old friend. I tell you I could have swallowed that whole band, trombone and all, if such a compliment would have been any gratification to them.

His friends contracted the mining mania; Bob Howland and Raish Phillips went down to Aurora and acquired

"feet" in mining claims and wrote him enthusiastic letters. With Captain Nye, the governor's brother, he visited them and was presented with an interest which permitted him to contribute an assessment every now and then toward the development of the mine; but his enthusiasm still languished.

He was interested more in the native riches above ground than in those concealed under it. He had heard that the timber around Lake Bigler (Tahoe) promised vast wealth which could be had for the asking. The lake itself and the adjacent mountains were said to be beautiful beyond the dream of art. He decided to locate a timber claim on its shores.

He made the trip afoot with a young Ohio lad, John Kinney, and the account of this trip as set down in *Roughing It* is one of the best things in the book. The lake proved all they had expected—*more* than they expected; it was a veritable habitation of the gods, with its delicious, winy atmosphere, its vast colonnades of pines, its measureless depths of water, so clear that to drift on it was like floating high aloft in midnothingness. They staked out a timber claim and made a semblance of fencing it and of building a habitation, to comply with the law; but their chief employment was a complete abandonment to the quiet luxury of that dim solitude: wandering among the trees, lounging along the shore, or drifting on that transparent, insubstantial sea. They did not sleep in their house, he says:

"It never occurred to us, for one thing; and, besides, it was built to hold the ground, and that was enough. We did not wish to strain it."

They lived by their camp-fire on the borders of the lake, and one day—it was just at nightfall—it got away from them, fired the forest, and destroyed their fence and habitation. His picture in *Roughing It* of the superb night spectacle, the mighty mountain conflagration reflected in

the waters of the lake, is splendidly vivid. The reader may wish to compare it with this extract from a letter written to Pamela at the time.

The level ranks of flame were relieved at intervals by the standard-bearers, as we called the tall, dead trees, wrapped in fire, and waving their blazing banners a hundred feet in the air. Then we could turn from the scene to the lake, and see every branch and leaf and cataract of flame upon its banks perfectly reflected, as in a gleaming, fiery mirror. The mighty roaring of the conflagration, together with our solitary and somewhat unsafe position (for there was no one within six miles of us), rendered the scene very impressive. Occasionally one of us would remove his pipe from his mouth and say, "*Superb, magnificent!—beautiful!*—but—by the Lord God Almighty, if we attempt to sleep in this little patch to-night, we'll never live till morning!"

This is good writing too, but it lacks the fancy and the choice of phrasing which would develop later. The fire ended their first excursion to Tahoe, but they made others and located other claims—claims in which the "folks at home," Mr. Moffett, James Lampton, and others, were included. It was the same James Lampton who would one day serve as a model for Colonel Sellers. Evidently Samuel Clemens had a good opinion of his business capacity in that earlier day, for he writes:

This is just the country for cousin Jim to live in. I don't believe it would take him six months to make $100,000 here if he had $3,000 to commence with. I suppose he can't leave his family, though.

Further along in the same letter his own overflowing Seller's optimism develops.

Orion and I have confidence enough in this country to think that if the war lets us alone we can make Mr. Moffett rich without its ever costing him a cent or a particle of trouble.

This letter bears date of October 25th, and from it we gather that a certain interest in mining claims had by this time developed.

We have got about 1,650 feet of mining ground, and, if it proves good, Mr. Moffett's name will go in, and if not I can get "feet" for him in the spring.

You see, Pamela, the trouble does not consist in getting mining ground—for there is plenty enough—but the money to work it with after you get it.

He refers to Pamela's two little children, his niece Annie and Baby Sam,[1] and promises to enter claims for them—timber claims probably—for he was by no means sanguine as yet concerning the mines. That was a long time ago. Tahoe land is sold by the lot, now, to summer residents. Those claims would have been riches to-day, but they were all abandoned presently, forgotten in the delirium which goes only with the pursuit of precious ores.

[1] Samuel E. Moffett, in later life a well-known journalist and editor.

XXXIII

THE PROSPECTOR

IT was not until early winter that Samuel Clemens got the real mining infection. Everybody had it by that time; the miracle is that he had not fallen an earlier victim. The wildest stories of sudden fortune were in the air, some of them undoubtedly true. Men had gone to bed paupers, on the verge of starvation, and awakened to find themselves millionaires. Others had sold for a song claims that had been suddenly found to be fairly stuffed with precious ores. Cart-loads of bricks — silver and gold—daily drove through the streets.

In the midst of these things reports came from the newly opened Humboldt region—flamed up with a radiance that was fairly blinding. The papers declared that Humboldt County "was the richest mineral region on God's footstool." The mountains were said to be literally bursting with gold and silver. A correspondent of the daily *Territorial Enterprise* fairly wallowed in rhetoric, yet found words inadequate to paint the measureless wealth of the Humboldt mines. No wonder those not already mad speedily became so. No wonder Samuel Clemens, with his natural tendency to speculative optimism, yielded to the epidemic and became as "frenzied as the craziest." The air to him suddenly began to shimmer; all his thoughts were of "leads" and "ledges" and "veins"; all his clouds had silver linings; all his dreams were of gold. He joined an expedition at once; he reproached himself bitterly for not having started earlier.

Hurry was the word! We wasted no time. Our party consisted of four persons—a blacksmith sixty years of age, two young lawyers, and myself. We bought a wagon and two miserable old horses. We put 1,800 pounds of provisions and mining tools in the wagon and drove out of Carson on a chilly December afternoon.

In a letter to his mother he states that besides provisions and mining tools, their load consisted of certain luxuries—*viz.*, ten pounds of killikinick, Watts's Hymns, fourteen decks of cards, *Dombey and Son*, a cribbage-board, one small keg of lager-beer, and the "Carmina Sacra."

The two young lawyers were A. W. (Gus) Oliver (Oliphant in *Roughing It*), and W. H. Clagget. Sam Clemens had known Billy Clagget as a law student in Keokuk, and they were brought together now by this association. Both Clagget and Oliver were promising young men, and would be heard from in time. The blacksmith's name was Tillou (Ballou), a sturdy, honest soul with a useful knowledge of mining and the repair of tools. There were also two dogs in the party—a small curly-tailed mongrel, Curney, the property of Mr. Tillou, and a young hound. The combination seemed a strong one.

It proved a weak one in the matter of horses. Oliver and Clemens had furnished the team, and their selection had not been of the best. It was two hundred miles to Humboldt, mostly across sand. The horses could not drag their load and the miners too, so the miners got out. Then they found it necessary to push.

Not because we were fond of it, Ma—oh, no! but on Bunker's account. Bunker was the "near" horse on the larboard side, named after the attorney-general of this Territory. My horse—and I am sorry you do not know him personally, Ma, for I feel toward him, sometimes, as if he were a blood relation of

our family—he is so lazy, you know—*my* horse—I was going to say, was the "off" horse on the starboard side. But it was on Bunker's account, principally, that we pushed behind the wagon. In fact, Ma, that horse had something on his mind all the way to Humboldt.[1]

So they had to push, and most of that two hundred miles through snow and sand storm they continued to push and swear and groan, sustained only by the thought that they must arrive at last, when their troubles would all be at an end, for they would be millionaires in a brief time and never know want or fatigue any more.

There were compensations: the camp-fire at night was cheerful, the food satisfying. They bundled close under the blankets and, when it was too cold to sleep, looked up at the stars, while the future entertainer of kings would spin yarn after yarn that made his hearers forget their discomforts. Judge Oliver, the last one of the party alive, in a recent letter to the writer of this history, says:

> He was the life of the camp; but sometimes there would come a reaction and he could hardly speak for a day or two. One day a pack of wolves chased us, and the hound Sam speaks of never stopped to look back till he reached the next station, many miles ahead.

Judge Oliver adds that an Indian war had just ended, and that they occasionally passed the charred ruin of a shack, and new graves. This was disturbing enough. Then they came to that desolation of desolations, the Alkali Desert, where the sand is of unknown depth, where the road is strewn thickly with the carcasses of dead beasts of burden, the charred remains of wagons, chains, bolts, and screws, which thirsty emigrants, grown desperate, have thrown away in the grand hope of being able, when less encumbered, to reach water.

[1] S. L. C. to his mother. Published in the Keokuk (Iowa) *Gate City*.

They traveled all day and night, pushing through that fierce, waterless waste to reach camp on the other side. It was three o'clock in the morning when they got across and dropped down utterly exhausted. Judge Oliver in his letter tells what happened then:

> The sun was high in the heavens when we were aroused from our sleep by a yelling band of Piute warriors. We were upon our feet in an instant. The pictures of burning cabins and the lonely graves we had passed were in our minds. Our scalps were still our own, and not dangling from the belts of our visitors. Sam pulled himself together, put his hand on his head as if to make sure he had not been scalped, and then with his inimitable drawl said: "Boys, they have left us our scalps. Let's give them all the flour and sugar they ask for." And we did give them a good supply, for we were grateful.

They were eleven weary days pushing their wagon and team the two hundred miles to Unionville, Humboldt County, arriving at last in a driving snow-storm. Unionville consisted of eleven poor cabins built in the bottom of a cañon, five on one side and six facing them on the other. They were poor, three-sided, one-room huts, the fourth side formed by the hill; the roof, a spread of white cotton. Stones used to roll down on them sometimes, and Mark Twain tells of live stock—specifically of a mule and cow—that interrupted the patient, long-suffering Oliver, who was trying to write poetry, and only complained when at last "an entire cow came rolling down the hill, crashed through on the table, and made a shapeless wreck of everything."[1]

Judge Oliver still does not complain; but he denies the cow. He says there were no cows in Humboldt in those days, so perhaps it was only a literary cow, though in any case it will long survive. Judge Oliver's name will go down with it to posterity.

[1] *The Innocents Abroad.*

In the letter which Samuel Clemens wrote home he tells of what they found in Unionville.

> "National" there was selling at $50 per foot and assayed $2,496 per ton at the mint in San Francisco. And the "Alda Nueva," "Peru," "Delirio," "Congress," "Independent," and others were immensely rich leads. And moreover, having winning ways with us, we could get "feet" enough to make us all rich one of these days.

"I confess with shame," says the author of *Roughing It*, "that I expected to find masses of silver lying all about the ground." And he adds that he slipped away from the cabin to find a claim on his own account, and tells how he came staggering back under a load of golden specimens; also how his specimens proved to be only worthless mica; and how he learned that in mining *nothing that glitters is gold*. His account in *Roughing It* of the Humboldt mining experience is sufficiently good history to make detail here unnecessary. Tillou instructed them in prospecting, and in time they located a fairly promising claim. They went to work on it with pick and shovel, then with drill and blasting-powder. Then they gave it up—

"One week of this satisfied me. I resigned."

They tried to tunnel, but soon resigned again. It was pleasanter to prospect and locate and trade claims and acquire feet in every new ledge than it was to dig—and about as profitable. The golden reports of Humboldt had been based on assays of selected rich specimens, and were mainly delirium and insanity. The Clemens-Clagget-Oliver-Tillou combination never touched their claims again with pick and shovel, though their faith, or at least their hope, in them did not immediately die. Billy Clagget put out his shingle as notary public, and Gus Oliver put out his as probate judge. Sam Clemens and Tillou, with a fat-witted, arrogant Prussian named Pfersdoff (Ollendorf) set out for Carson City.

It is not certain what became of the wagon and team, or of the two dogs.

The Carson travelers were water-bound at a tavern on the Carson River (the scene of the "Arkansas" sketch), with a fighting, drinking lot. Pfersdoff got them nearly drowned getting away, and finally succeeded in getting them absolutely lost in the snow. The author of *Roughing It* tells us how they gave themselves up to die, and how each swore off whatever he had in the way of an evil habit, how they cast their tempters—tobacco, cards, and whisky—into the snow. He further tells us how next morning, when they woke to find themselves alive, within a few rods of a hostelry, they surreptitiously dug up those things again and, deep in shame and luxury, resumed their fallen ways. It was the 29th of January when they reached Carson City. They had been gone not quite two months, one of which had been spent in travel. It was a brief period, but it contained an episode, and it seemed like years.

XXXIV

TERRITORIAL CHARACTERISTICS

MEANTIME, the Territorial secretary had found difficulties in launching the ship of state. There was no legislative hall in Carson City; and if Abram Curry, one of the original owners of the celebrated Gould and Curry mine—"Curry—old Curry—old Abe Curry," as he called himself—had not tendered the use of a hall rent free, the first legislature would have been obliged to "sit in the desert." Furthermore, Orion had met with certain acute troubles of his own. The government at Washington had not appreciated his economies in the matter of cheap office rental, and it *had* stipulated the price which he was to pay for public printing and various other services—prices fixed according to Eastern standards. These prices did not obtain in Nevada, and when Orion, confident that because of his other economies the comptroller would stretch a point and allow the increased frontier tariff, he was met with the usual thick-headed official lack of imagination, with the result that the excess paid was deducted from his slender salary. With a man of less conscience this condition would easily have been offset by another wherein other rates, less arbitrary, would have been adjusted to negotiate the official deficit. With Orion Clemens such a remedy was not even considered; yielding, unstable, blown by every wind of influence though he was, Orion's integrity was a rock.

Governor Nye was among those who presently made this discovery. Old politician that he was—former police

commissioner of New York City—Nye took care of his own problems in the customary manner. To him, politics was simply a game—to be played to win. He was a popular, jovial man, well liked and thought of, but he did not lie awake, as Orion did, planning economies for the government, or how to make up excess charges out of his salary. To him Nevada was simply a doorway to the United States Senate, and in the mean time his brigade required official recognition and perquisites. The governor found Orion Clemens an impediment to this policy. Orion could not be brought to a proper political understanding of "special bills and accounts," and relations between the secretary of state and the governor were becoming strained.

It was about this time that the man who had been potentate of a pilot-house on a Mississippi River steamer returned from Humboldt. He was fond of the governor, but he had still higher regard for the family integrity. When he had heard Orion's troubled story, he called on Governor Nye and delivered himself in his own fashion. In his former employments he had acquired a vocabulary and moral backbone sufficient to his needs. We may regret that no stenographic report was made of the interview. It would be priceless now. But it is lost; we only know that Orion's rectitude was not again assailed, and that curiously enough Governor Nye apparently conceived a strong admiration and respect for his brother.

Samuel Clemens, miner, remained but a brief time in Carson City—only long enough to arrange for a new and more persistent venture. He did not confess his Humboldt failure to his people; in fact, he had not as yet confessed it to himself; his avowed purpose was to *return* to Humboldt after a brief investigation of the Esmeralda mines. He had been paying heavy assessments on his holdings there; and, with a knowledge of mining gained at Unionville, he felt that his personal attention at Aurora might be

important. As a matter of fact, he was by this time fairly daft on the subject of mines and mining, with the rest of the community for company.

His earlier praises of the wonders and climate of Tahoe had inspired his sister Pamela, always frail, with a desire to visit that health-giving land. Perhaps he felt that he recommended the country somewhat too highly.

"By George, Pamela," he said, "I begin to fear that I have invoked a spirit of some kind or other, which I will find more than difficult to allay." He proceeds to recommend *California* as a residence for any or all of them, but he is clearly doubtful concerning Nevada.

Some people are malicious enough to think that if the devil were set at liberty and told to confine himself to Nevada Territory, he would come here and look sadly around awhile, and then get homesick and go back to hell again. . . . Why, I have had my whiskers and mustaches so full of alkali dust that you'd have thought I worked in a starch factory and boarded in a flour barrel.

But then he can no longer restrain his youth and optimism. How could he, with a fortune so plainly in view? It was already in his grasp in imagination; he was on the way home with it.

I expect to return to St. Louis in July—per steamer. I don't say that I *will* return then, or that I shall *be able* to do it—but I *expect to*—you bet. I came down here from Humboldt, in order to look after our Esmeralda interests. Yesterday, Bob Howland arrived here, and I have had a talk with him. He owns with me in the "Horatio and Derby" ledge. He says our tunnel is in 52 feet, and a small stream of water has been struck, which bids fair to become a "big thing" by the time the ledge is reached—sufficient to supply a mill. Now, if you knew anything of the value of water here, you would perceive at a glance that if the water should amount to 50 or 100 inches, *we* wouldn't care whether school kept or not. If the ledge should prove to

be worthless, we'd *sell* the water for money enough to give us quite a lift. But, you see, the ledge *will not* prove to be worthless. We have located, near by, a fine site for a mill, and when we strike the ledge, you know, we'll have a mill-site, water-power, and payrock, all handy. *Then* we sha'n't care whether we have capital or not. Mill folks will build us a mill, and wait for their pay. If nothing goes wrong, we'll strike the ledge in June—and if we do, I'll be home in July, you know.

He pauses at this point for a paragraph of self-analysis —characteristic and crystal-clear.

So, just keep your clothes on, Pamela, until I come. Don't you know that undemonstrated human calculations won't do to bet on? Don't you know that I have only *talked*, as yet, but proved nothing? Don't you know that I have expended money in this country but have made none myself? Don't you know that I have never held in my hands a gold or silver bar that belonged to me? Don't you know that it's all talk and no cider so far? Don't you know that people who always feel jolly, no matter where they are or what happens to them—who have the organ of Hope preposterously developed—who are endowed with an uncongealable sanguine temperament—who never feel concerned about the price of corn—and who cannot, by any possibility, discover any but the *bright* side of a picture—are very apt to go to extremes and exaggerate with 40-horse microscopic power?

But—but—
In the bright lexicon of youth,
There is *no such* word as Fail—
and I'll prove it!

Whereupon, he lets himself go again, full-tilt:

By George, if I *just* had a thousand dollars I'd be all right! Now there's the "Horatio," for instance. There are five or six shareholders in it, and I *know* I could buy half of their interests at, say $20 per foot, now that flour is worth $50 per barrel and they are pressed for money, but I am hard up myself, and can't

buy—and in June they'll strike the ledge, and then "good-by canary." I can't get it for love or money. Twenty dollars a foot! Think of it! For ground that is *proven* to be rich. Twenty dollars, Madam—and we wouldn't part with a foot of our 75 for five times the sum. So it will be in Humboldt next summer. The boys will get pushed and sell ground for a song that is worth a fortune. But I am at the helm, now. I have convinced Orion that he hasn't business talent enough to carry on a peanut-stand, and he has solemnly promised me that he will meddle no more with mining or other matters not connected with the secretary's office. So, you see, if mines are to be bought or sold, or tunnels run or shafts sunk, parties have to come to me—and me only. I'm the "firm," you know.

There are pages of this, all glowing with golden expectations and plans. Ah, well! we have all written such letters home at one time and another—of gold-mines of one form or another.

He closes at last with a bit of pleasantry for his mother.

Ma says: "It looks like a man can't hold public office and be honest." Why, certainly not, Madam. A man *can't* hold public office and be honest. Lord bless you, it is a common practice with Orion to go about town stealing little things that happen to be lying around loose. And I don't remember having heard him speak the truth since we have been in Nevada. He even tries to prevail upon *me* to do these things, Ma, but I wasn't brought up in that way, you know. You showed the public what *you* could do in that line when you raised me, Madam. But then you ought to have raised me first, so that Orion could have had the benefit of my example. Do you know that he stole all the stamps out of an 8-stamp quartz-mill one night, and brought them home under his overcoat and hid them in the back room?

XXXV

THE MINER

HE had about exhausted his own funds by this time, and it was necessary that Orion should become the financier. The brothers owned their Esmeralda claims in partnership, and it was agreed that Orion, out of his modest depleted pay, should furnish the means, while the other would go actively into the field and develop their riches. Neither had the slightest doubt but that they would be millionaires presently, and both were willing to struggle and starve for the few intervening weeks.

It was February when the printer-pilot-miner arrived in Aurora, that rough, turbulent camp of the Esmeralda district lying about one hundred miles south of Carson City, on the edge of California, in the Sierra slopes. Everything was frozen and covered with snow; but there was no lack of excitement and prospecting and grabbing for "feet" in this ledge and that, buried deep under the ice and drift. The new arrival camped with Horatio Phillips (Raish), in a tiny cabin with a domestic roof (the ruin of it still stands), and they cooked and bunked together and combined their resources in a common fund. Bob Howland joined them presently, and later an experienced miner, Calvin H. Higbie (Cal), one day to be immortalized in the story of *Roughing It* and in the dedication of that book. Around the cabin stove they would gather, and paw over their specimens, or test them with blow-pipe and "horn" spoon, after which they would plan tunnels and figure estimates of pros-

pective wealth. Never mind if the food was poor and scanty, and the chill wind came in everywhere, and the roof leaked like a filter; they were living in a land where all the mountains were banked with nuggets, where all the rivers ran gold. Bob Howland declared later that they used to go out at night and gather up empty champagne-bottles and fruit-tins and pile them in the rear of their cabin to convey to others the appearance of affluence and high living. When they lacked for other employment and were likely to be discouraged, the ex-pilot would "ride the bunk" and smoke and, without money and without price, distribute riches more valuable than any they would ever dig out of those Esmeralda Hills. At other times he talked little or not at all, but sat in one corner and wrote, wholly oblivious of his surroundings. They thought he was writing letters, though letters were not many and only to Orion during this period. It was the old literary impulse stirring again, the desire to set things down for their own sake, the natural hunger for print. One or two of his earlier letters home had found their way into a Keokuk paper—the *Gate City*. Copies containing them had gone back to Orion, who had shown them to a representative of the *Territorial Enterprise*, a young man named Barstow, who thought them amusing. The *Enterprise* reprinted at least one of these letters, or portions of it, and with this encouragement the author of it sent an occasional contribution direct to that paper over the pen-name "Josh." He did not care to sign his own name. He was a miner who was soon to be a magnate; he had no desire to be known as a camp scribbler.

He received no pay for these offerings, and expected none. They were sketches of a broadly burlesque sort, the robust horse-play kind of humor that belongs to the frontier. They were not especially promising efforts. One of them was about an old rackabones of a horse,

a sort of preliminary study for "Oahu," of the Sandwich Islands, or "Baalbec" and "Jericho," of Syria. If any one had told him, or had told any reader of this sketch, that the author of it was knocking at the door of the house of fame such a person's judgment or sincerity would have been open to doubt. Nevertheless, it was true, though the knock was timid and halting and the summons to cross the threshold long delayed.

A winter mining-camp is the most bleak and comfortless of places. The saloon and gambling-house furnished the only real warmth and cheer. Our Aurora miners would have been less than human, or more, if they had not found diversion now and then in the happy harbors of sin. Once there was a great ball given at a newly opened pavilion, and Sam Clemens is said to have distinguished himself by his unrestrained and spontaneous enjoyment of the tripping harmony. Cal Higbie, who was present, writes:

> In changing partners, whenever he saw a hand raised he would grasp it with great pleasure and sail off into another set, oblivious to his surroundings. Sometimes he would act as though there was no use in trying to go right or to dance like other people, and with his eyes closed he would do a hoe-down or a double-shuffle all alone, talking to himself and saying that he never dreamed there was so much pleasure to be obtained at a ball. It was all as natural as a child's play. By the second set, all the ladies were falling over themselves to get him for a partner, and most of the crowd, too full of mirth to dance, were standing or sitting around, dying with laughter.

What a child he always was—always, to the very end!

With the first break of winter the excitement that had been fermenting and stewing around camp stoves overflowed into the streets, washed up the gullies, and assailed the hills. There came then a period of madness, beside which the Humboldt excitement had been mere intoxication. Higbie says:

It was amazing how wild the people became all over the Pacific coast. In San Francisco and other large cities barbers, hack-drivers, servant-girls, merchants, and nearly every class of people would club together and send agents representing all the way from $5,000 to $500,000 or more to buy mines. They would buy anything in the shape of quartz, whether it contained any mineral value or not.

The letters which went from the Aurora miner to Orion are humanly documentary. They are likely to be *staccato* in their movement; they show nervous haste in their composition, eagerness, and suppressed excitement; they are not always coherent; they are seldom humorous, except in a savage way; they are often profane; they are likely to be violent. Even the handwriting has a terse look; the flourish of youth has gone out of it. Altogether they reveal the tense anxiety of the gambling mania of which mining is the ultimate form. An extract from a letter of April 13th is a fair exhibit:

Work not yet begun on the "Horatio and Derby"—haven't seen it yet. It is still in the snow. Shall begin on it within 3 or 4 weeks—strike the ledge in July. Guess it is good—worth from $30 to $50 a foot in California. . . .

Man named Gebhart shot here yesterday while trying to defend a claim on Last Chance Hill. Expect he will die.

These mills here are not worth a d—n—except Clayton's—and it is not in full working trim yet.

Send me $40 or $50—by mail—immediately. I go to work to-morrow with pick and shovel. Something's got to come, by G—, before I let go here.

By the end of April work had become active in the mines, though the snow in places was still deep and the ground stony with frost. On the 28th he writes:

I have been at work all day blasting and digging, and d—ning one of our new claims—"Dashaway"—which I don't think

a great deal of, but which I am willing to try. We are down, now, 10 or 12 feet. We are following down *under* the ledge, but not taking it out. If we get up a windlass to-morrow we shall take out the ledge, and see whether it is worth anything or not.

It must have been hard work picking away at the flinty ledges in the cold; and the "Dashaway" would seem to have proven a disappointment, for there is no promising mention of it again. Instead, we hear of the "Flyaway" and "Annipolitan" and the "Live Yankee" and of a dozen others, each of which holds out the beacon of hope for a little while and then passes from notice forever. In May it is the "Monitor" that is sure to bring affluence, though realization is no longer regarded as immediate.

To use a French expression, I have "got my d—d satisfy" at last. Two years' time will make us capitalists, in spite of anything.

Therefore we need fret and fume and worry and doubt no more, but just lie still and put up with privation for six months. Perhaps 3 months will "let us out." Then, if government refuses to pay the rent on your new office we can do it ourselves. We have got to wait six weeks, anyhow, for a dividend—maybe longer—but that it *will* come there is no shadow of a doubt. I have got the thing sifted down to a dead moral certainty. I own one-eighth of the new "Monitor Ledge, Clemens Company," and money can't buy a foot of it; because I know it to contain our fortune. The ledge is six feet wide, and one needs no glass to see gold and silver in it. . . .

When you and I came out here we did not expect '63 or '64 to find us rich men—and if that proposition had been made we would have accepted it gladly. Now, it *is* made. I am willing, now, that "Neary's tunnel" or anybody else's tunnel shall succeed. Some of them may beat us a few months, but we shall be on hand in the fullness of time, as sure as fate. I would hate to swap chances with any member of the tribe. . . .

It is the same man who twenty-five years later would fasten his faith and capital to a type-setting machine and

refuse to exchange stock in it, share for share, with the Mergenthaler linotype. He adds:

But I have struck my tent in Esmeralda, and I care for no mines but those which I can superintend myself. I am a citizen here now, and I am satisfied, although Ratio and I are "strapped" and we haven't three days' rations in the house. . . . I shall work the "Monitor" and the other claims with my own hands. I prospected ¾ of a pound of "Monitor" yesterday, and Raish reduced it with the blow-pipe, and got about 10 or 12 cents in gold and silver, besides the other half of it which we spilt on the floor and didn't get. . . .

I tried to break a handsome chunk from a huge piece of my darling "Monitor" which we brought from the croppings yesterday, but it all splintered up, and I send you the scraps. I call that "choice"—any d—d fool would.

Don't ask if it has been assayed, for it hasn't. It don't need it. It is simply able to speak for itself. It is six feet wide on top, and traversed through with veins whose color proclaims their worth.

What the devil does a man want with any more feet when he owns in the invincible bomb-proof "Monitor"?

There is much more of this, and other such letters, most of them ending with demands for money. The living, the tools, the blasting-powder, and the help eat it up faster than Orion's salary can grow.

"Send me $50 or $100, all you can spare; put away $150 subject to my call—we shall need it soon for the tunnel." The letters are full of such admonition, and Orion, more insane, if anything, than his brother, is scraping his dollars and pennies together to keep the mines going. He is constantly warned to buy no claims on his own account and promises faithfully, but cannot resist now and then when luring baits are laid before him, though such ventures invariably result in violent and profane protests from Aurora.

"The pick and shovel are the only claims I have any

confidence in now," the miner concludes, after one fierce outburst. "My back is sore, and my hands are blistered with handling them to-day."

But even the pick and shovel did not inspire confidence a little later. He writes that the work goes slowly, very slowly, but that they still hope to strike it some day. "But—if we strike it rich—I've lost my guess, that's all." Then he adds: "Couldn't go on the hill to-day. It snowed. It always snows here, I expect"; and the final heart-sick line, "Don't you suppose they have pretty much quit writing at home?"

This is midsummer, and snow still interferes with the work. One feels the dreary uselessness of the quest.

Yet resolution did not wholly die, or even enthusiasm. These things were as recurrent as new prospects, which were plentiful enough. In a still subsequent letter he declares that he will never look upon his mother's face again, or his sister's, or get married, or revisit the "Banner State," until he is a rich man, though there is less assurance than desperation in the words.

In *Roughing It* the author tells us that, when flour had reached one dollar a pound and he could no longer get the dollar, he abandoned mining and went to milling "as a common laborer in a quartz-mill at ten dollars a week." This statement requires modification. It was not entirely for the money that he undertook the laborious task of washing "riffles" and "screening tailings." The money was welcome enough, no doubt, but the greater purpose was to learn refining, so that when his mines developed he could establish his own mill and personally superintend the work. It is like him to wish us to believe that he was obliged to give up being a mining magnate to become a laborer in a quartz-mill, for there is a grim humor in the confession. That he abandoned the milling experiment at the end of a week is a true statement. He got a violent cold in the damp place, and came near getting salivated,

he says in a letter, "working in the quicksilver and chemicals. I hardly think I shall try the experiment again. It is a confining business, and I will not be confined for love or money."

As recreation after this trying experience, Higbie took him on a tour, prospecting for the traditional "Cement Mine," a lost claim where, in a deposit of cement rock, gold nuggets were said to be as thick as raisins in a fruit-cake. They did not find the mine, but they visited Mono Lake—that ghastly, lifeless alkali sea among the hills, which in *Roughing It* he has so vividly pictured. It was good to get away from the stress of things; and they repeated the experiment. They made a walking trip to Yosemite, carrying their packs, camping and fishing in that far, tremendous isolation, which in those days few human beings had ever visited at all. Such trips furnished a delicious respite from the fevered struggle around tunnel and shaft. Amid mountain-peaks and giant forests and by tumbling falls the quest for gold hardly seemed worth while. More than once that summer he went alone into the wilderness to find his balance and to get away entirely from humankind.

XXXVI

LAST MINING DAYS

It was late in July when he wrote:

If I do not forget it, I will send you, per next mail, a pinch of decom. (decomposed rock) which I pinched with thumb and finger from Wide West ledge a while ago. Raish and I have secured 200 out of a company with 400 ft. in it, which perhaps (the ledge, I mean) is a spur from the W. W.—our shaft is about 100 ft. from the W. W. shaft. In order to get in, we agreed to sink 30 ft. We have sublet to another man for 50 ft., and we pay for powder and sharpening tools.

This was the "Blind Lead" claim of *Roughing It*, but the episode as set down in that book is somewhat dramatized. It is quite true that he visited and nursed Captain Nye while Higbie was off following the "Cement" *ignus fatuus* and that the "Wide West" holdings were forfeited through neglect. But if the loss was regarded as a heavy one, the letters fail to show it. It is a matter of dispute to-day whether or not the claim was ever of any value. A well-known California author[1] declares:

No one need to fear that he ran any chance of being a millionaire through the "Wide West" mine, for the writer, as a child, played over that historic spot and saw only a shut-down mill and desolate hole in the ground to mark the spot where overhopeful men had sunk thousands and thousands, that they never recovered.

[1] Ella Sterling Cummins, author of *The Story of the Files*, etc.

The "Blind Lead" episode, as related, is presumably a tale of what *might* have happened—a possibility rather than an actuality. It is vividly true in atmosphere, however, and forms a strong and natural climax for closing the mining episode, while the literary privilege warrants any liberties he may have taken for art's sake.

In reality the close of his mining career was not sudden and spectacular; it was a lingering close, a reluctant and gradual surrender. The "Josh" letters to the *Enterprise* had awakened at least a measure of interest, and Orion had not failed to identify their author when any promising occasion offered; as a result certain tentative overtures had been made for similar material. Orion eagerly communicated such chances, for the money situation was becoming a desperate one. A letter from the Aurora miner written near the end of July presents the situation very fully. An extract or two will be sufficient:

> My debts are greater than I thought for—I bought $25 worth of clothing and sent $25 to Higbie, in the cement diggings. I owe about $45 or $50, and have got about $45 in my pocket. But how in the h—l I am going to live on something over $100 until October or November is singular. The fact is, I must have something to do, and that *shortly*, too. . . . Now write to the Sacramento *Union* folks, or to Marsh, and tell them I'll write as many letters a week as they want for $10 a week. My board must be paid. Tell them I have corresponded with the N. Orleans *Crescent* and other papers—and the *Enterprise*.
>
> If they want letters from here—who'll run from morning till night collecting material cheaper? I'll write a short letter twice a week, for the present for the *Age*, for $5 per week. Now it has been a long time since I couldn't make my own living, and it shall be a long time before I loaf another year.

Nothing came of these possibilities, but about this time Barstow, of the *Enterprise*, conferred with Joseph T. Goodman, editor and owner of the paper, as to the advisability of adding the author of the "Josh" letters to

their local staff. Joe Goodman, who had as keen a literary perception as any man that ever pitched a journalistic tent on the Pacific coast (and there could be no higher praise than that), looked over the letters and agreed with Barstow that the man who wrote them had "something in him." Two of the sketches in particular he thought promising. One of them was a burlesque report of an egotistical lecturer who was referred to as "Professor Personal Pronoun." It closed by stating that it was "impossible to print his lecture in full, as the type-cases had run out of capital I's." But it was the other sketch which settled Goodman's decision. It was also a burlesque report, this time of a Fourth-of-July oration. It opened, "I was sired by the Great American Eagle and foaled by a continental dam." This was followed by a string of stock patriotic phrases absurdly arranged. But it was the opening itself that won Goodman's heart.

"That is the sort of thing we want," he said. "Write to him, Barstow, and ask him if he wants to come up here."

Barstow wrote, offering twenty-five dollars a week, a tempting sum. This was at the end of July, 1862.

In *Roughing It* we are led to believe that the author regarded this as a gift from heaven and accepted it straightaway. As a matter of fact, he fasted and prayed a good while over the "call." To Orion he wrote:

> Barstow has offered me the post as local reporter for the *Enterprise* at $25 a week, and I have written him that I will let him know next mail, if possible.

There was no desperate eagerness, you see, to break into literature, even under those urgent conditions. It meant the surrender of all hope in the mines, the confession of another failure. On August 7th he wrote again to Orion. He had written to Barstow, he said, asking

when they thought he might be needed. He was playing for time to consider.

Now, I shall leave at midnight to-night, alone and on foot, for a walk of 60 or 70 miles through a totally uninhabited country, and it is barely possible that mail facilities may prove infernally "slow." But do *you* write Barstow that I have left here for a week or so, and in case he should want me, he must write me here, or let me know through you.

So he had gone into the wilderness to fight out his battle alone. But eight days later, when he had returned, there was still no decision. In a letter to Pamela of this date he refers playfully to the discomforts of his cabin and mentions a hope that he will spend the winter in San Francisco; but there is no reference in it to any newspaper prospects—nor to the mines, for that matter. Phillips, Howland, and Higbie would seem to have given up by this time, and he was camping with Dan Twing and a dog, a combination amusingly described. It is a pleasant enough letter, but the note of discouragement creeps in:

I did think for a while of going home this fall—but when I found that that was, and had been, the cherished intention and the darling aspiration every year of these old care-worn Californians for twelve weary years, I felt a little uncomfortable, so I stole a march on Disappointment and said I would *not* go home this fall. This country suits me, and it *shall* suit me whether or no.

He was dying hard, desperately hard; how could he know, to paraphrase the old form of Christian comfort, that his end as a miner would mean, in another sphere, "a brighter resurrection" than even his rainbow imagination could paint?

XXXVII

THE NEW ESTATE

IT was the afternoon of a hot, dusty August day when a worn, travel-stained pilgrim drifted laggingly into the office of the Virginia City *Enterprise*, then in its new building on C Street, and, loosening a heavy roll of blankets from his shoulders, dropped wearily into a chair. He wore a rusty slouch hat, no coat, a faded blue flannel shirt, a Navy revolver; his trousers were hanging on his boot tops. A tangle of reddish-brown hair fell on his shoulders, and a mass of tawny beard, dingy with alkali dust, dropped half-way to his waist.

Aurora lay one hundred and thirty miles from Virginia. He had walked that distance, carrying his heavy load. Editor Goodman was absent at the moment, but the other proprietor, Denis E. McCarthy, signified that the caller might state his errand. The wanderer regarded him with a far-away look and said, absently and with deliberation:

"My starboard leg seems to be unshipped. I'd like about one hundred yards of line; I think I am falling to pieces." Then he added: "I want to see Mr. Barstow, or Mr. Goodman. My name is Clemens, and I've come to write for the paper."

It was the master of the world's widest estate come to claim his kingdom.

William Wright, who had won a wide celebrity on the Coast as Dan de Quille, was in the editorial chair and took charge of the new arrival. He was going on a trip to the States soon; it was mainly on this account

that the new man had been engaged. The "Josh" letters were very good, in Dan's opinion; he gave their author a cordial welcome, and took him around to his boarding-place. It was the beginning of an association that continued during Samuel Clemens's stay in Virginia City and of a friendship that lasted many years.

The *Territorial Enterprise* was one of the most remarkable frontier papers ever published. Its editor-in-chief, Joseph Goodman, was a man with rare appreciation, wide human understanding, and a comprehensive newspaper policy. Being a young man, he had no policy, in fact, beyond the general purpose that his paper should be a forum for absolutely free speech, provided any serious statement it contained was based upon knowledge. His instructions to the new reporter were about as follows:

"Never say we learn so and so, or it is rumored, or we understand so and so; but go to headquarters and get the absolute facts; then speak out and say it *is* so and so. In the one case you are likely to be shot, and in the other you are pretty certain to be; but you will preserve the public confidence."

Goodman was not new to the West. He had come to California as a boy and had been a miner, explorer, printer, and contributor by turns. Early in '61, when the Comstock Lode [1] was new and Virginia in the first flush of its monster boom, he and Denis McCarthy had scraped together a few dollars and bought the paper. It had been a hand-to-hand struggle for a while, but in a brief two years, from a starving sheet in a shanty the *Enterprise*, with new building, new presses, and a corps of swift compositors brought up from San Francisco, had become altogether metropolitan, as well as the most widely considered paper on the Coast. It had been borne

[1] Named for its discoverer, Henry T. P. Comstock, a half-crazy miner, who realized very little from his stupendous find.

upward by the Comstock tide, though its fearless, picturesque utterance would have given it distinction anywhere. Goodman himself was a fine, forceful writer, and Dan de Quille and R. M. Daggett (afterward United States minister to Hawaii) were representative of *Enterprise* men.[1]

Samuel Clemens fitted precisely into this group. He added the fresh, rugged vigor of thought and expression that was the very essence of the Comstock, which was like every other frontier mining-camp, only on a more lavish, more overwhelming scale.

There was no uncertainty about the Comstock; the silver and gold were there. Flanking the foot of Mount Davidson, the towns of Gold Hill and Virginia and the long street between were fairly underburrowed and underpinned by the gigantic mining construction of that opulent lode whose treasures were actually glutting the mineral markets of the world. The streets overhead seethed and swarmed with miners, mine-owners, and adventurers—riotous, rollicking children of fortune, always ready to drink and make merry, as eager in their pursuit of pleasure as of gold. Comstockers would always laugh at a joke; the rougher the better. The town of Virginia itself was just a huge joke to most of them. Everybody had money; everybody wanted to laugh and have a good time. The *Enterprise*, "Comstock to the backbone," did what it could to help things along.

It was a sort of free ring, with every one for himself. Goodman let the boys write and print in accordance with their own ideas and upon any subject. Often they wrote

[1] The Comstock of that day became famous for its journalism. Associated with the Virginia papers then or soon afterward were such men as Tom Fitch (the silver-tongued orator), Alf Doten, W. J. Forbes, C. C. Goodwin, H. R. Mighels, Clement T. Rice, Arthur McEwen, and Sam Davis—a great array indeed for a new Territory.

of each other—squibs and burlesques, which gratified the Comstock far more than mere news.[1] It was the proper class-room for Mark Twain, an encouraging audience and free utterance: fortune could have devised nothing better for him than that.

He was peculiarly fitted for the position. Unspoiled humanity appealed to him, and the Comstock presented human nature in its earliest landscape forms. Furthermore, the Comstock was essentially optimistic—so was he; any hole in the ground to him held a possible, even a probable, fortune.

His pilot memory became a valuable asset in news-gathering. Remembering marks, banks, sounding, and other river detail belonged apparently in the same category of attainments as remembering items and localities of news. He could travel all day without a note-book and at night reproduce the day's budget or at least the picturesqueness of it, without error. He was presently accounted a good reporter, except where statistics—measurements and figures—were concerned. These he gave "a lick and a promise," according to De Quille, who wrote afterward of their associations. De Quille says further:

> Mark and I agreed well in our work, which we divided when there was a rush of events; but we often cruised in company, he taking the items of news he could handle best, and I such as I felt competent to work up. However, we wrote at the same table and frequently helped each other with such suggestions as occurred to us during the brief consultations we held in regard to the handling of any matters of importance. Never was there an angry word between us in all the time we worked together.

[1] "The indifference to 'news' was noble—none the less so because it was so blissfully unconscious. Editors Mark or Dan would dismiss a murder with a couple of inches and sit down and fill up a column with a fancy sketch."—Arthur McEwen.

De Quille tells how Clemens clipped items with a knife when there were no scissors handy, and slashed through on the top of his desk, which in time took on the semblance "of a huge polar star, spiritedly dashing forth a thousand rays."

The author of *Roughing It* has given us a better picture of the Virginia City of those days and his work there than any one else will ever write. He has made us feel the general spirit of affluence that prevailed; how the problem was not to get money, but to spend it; how "feet" in any one of a hundred mines could be had for the asking; how such shares were offered like apples or cigars or bonbons, as a natural matter of courtesy when one happened to have his supply in view; how any one connected with a newspaper would have stocks thrust upon him, and how in a brief time he had acquired a trunkful of such riches and usually had something to sell when any of the claims made a stir on the market. He has told us of the desperadoes and their trifling regard for human life, and preserved other elemental characters of these prodigal days. The funeral of Buck Fanshaw—that amazing masterpiece—is a complete epitome of the social frontier.

It would not be the part of wisdom to attempt another inclusive presentation of Comstock conditions. We may only hope to add a few details of history, justified now by time and circumstances, to supplement the picture with certain data of personality preserved from the drift of years.

XXXVIII

ONE OF THE "STAFF"

THE new reporter found acquaintance easy. The office force was like one family among which there was no line of caste. Proprietors, editors, and printers were social equals; there was little ceremony among them —none at all outside of the office.[1] Samuel Clemens immediately became "Sam," or "Josh," to his associates, just as De Quille was "Dan" and Goodman "Joe." He found that he disliked the name of Josh, and, as he did not sign it again, it was presently dropped. The office, and Virginia City generally, quickly grew fond of him, delighting in his originality and measured speech. *Enterprise* readers began to identify his work, then unsigned, and to enjoy its fresh phrasing, even when it was only the usual local item or mining notice. True to its name and reputation, the paper had added a new attraction.

It was only a brief time after his arrival in Virginia City that Clemens began the series of hoaxes which would carry his reputation, not always in an enviable fashion, across the Sierras and down the Pacific coast. With one exception these are lost to-day, for so far as known there is not a single file of the *Enterprise* in existence. Only a few stray copies and clippings are preserved, but we know the story of some of these literary pranks and of their

[1] "The paper went to press at two in the morning, then all the staff and all the compositors gathered themselves together in the composing-room and drank beer and sang the popular war-songs of the day until dawn."—S. L. C., in 1908.

results. They were usually intended as a special punishment of some particular individual or paper or locality; but victims were gathered by the wholesale in their seductive web. Mark Twain himself, in his book of *Sketches*, has set down something concerning the first of these, "The Petrified Man," and of another, "My Bloody Massacre," but in neither case has he told it all. "The Petrified Man" hoax was directed at an official named Sewall, a coroner and justice of the peace at Humboldt, who had been pompously indifferent in the matter of supplying news. The story, told with great circumstance and apparent care as to detail, related the finding of a petrified prehistoric man, partially imbedded in a rock, in a cave in the desert more than one hundred miles from Humboldt, and how Sewall had made the perilous five-day journey in the alkali waste to hold an inquest over a man that had been dead three hundred years; also how, "with that delicacy so characteristic of him," Sewall had forbidden the miners from blasting him from his position. The account further stated that the hands of the deceased were arranged in a peculiar fashion; and the description of the arrangement was so skilfully woven in with other matters that at first, or even second, reading one might not see that the position indicated was the ancient one which begins with the thumb at the nose and in many ages has been used impolitely to express ridicule and the word "sold." But the description was a shade *too* ingenious. The author expected that the exchanges would see the joke and perhaps assist in the fun he would have with Sewall. He did not contemplate a joke on the papers themselves. As a matter of fact, no one saw the "sell" and most of the papers printed his story of the petrified man as a genuine discovery. This was a surprise, and a momentary disappointment; then he realized that he had builded better than he knew. He gathered up a bundle of the exchanges and sent them to Sewall; also he

sent marked copies to scientific men in various parts of the United States. The papers had taken it seriously; perhaps the scientists would. Some of them did, and Sewall's days became unhappy because of letters received asking further information. As literature, the effort did not rank high, and as a trick on an obscure official it was hardly worth while; but, as a joke on the Coast exchanges and press generally, it was greatly regarded and its author, though as yet unnamed, acquired prestige.

Inquiries began to be made as to who was the smart chap in Virginia that did these things. The papers became wary and read *Enterprise* items twice before clipping them. Clemens turned his attention to other matters to lull suspicion. The great "Dutch Nick Massacre" did not follow until a year later.

Reference has already been made to the Comstock's delight in humor of a positive sort. The practical joke was legal tender in Virginia. One might protest and swear, but he must take it. An example of Comstock humor, regarded as the finest assay, is an incident still told of Leslie Blackburn and Pat Holland, two gay men about town. They were coming down C Street one morning when they saw some fine watermelons on a fruit-stand at the International Hotel corner. Watermelons were rare and costly in that day and locality, and these were worth three dollars apiece. Blackburn said:

"Pat, let's get one of those watermelons. You engage that fellow in conversation while I stand at the corner, where I can step around out of sight easily. When you have got him interested, point to something on the back shelf and pitch me a melon."

This appealed to Holland, and he carried out his part of the plan perfectly; but when he pitched the watermelon Blackburn simply put his hands in his pockets, and stepped around the corner, leaving the melon a fearful disaster on the pavement. It was almost im-

possible for Pat to explain to the fruit-man why he pitched away a three-dollar melon like that even after paying for it, and it was still more trying also more expensive, to explain to the boys facing the various bars along C Street.

Sam Clemens, himself a practical joker in his youth, found a healthy delight in this knock-down humor of the Comstock. It appealed to his vigorous, elemental nature. He seldom indulged physically in such things; but his printed squibs and hoaxes and his keen love of the ridiculous placed him in the joker class, while his prompt temper, droll manner, and rare gift of invective made him an enticing victim.

Among the *Enterprise* compositors was one by the name of Stephen E. Gillis (Steve, of course — one of the "fighting Gillises"), a small, fearless young fellow, handsome, quick of wit, with eyes like needle-points.

"Steve weighed only ninety-five pounds," Mark Twain once wrote of him, "but it was well known throughout the Territory that with his fists he could whip anybody that walked on two legs, let his weight and science be what they might."

Clemens was fond of Steve Gillis from the first. The two became closely associated in time, and were always bosom friends; but Steve was a merciless joker, and never as long as they were together could he "resist the temptation of making Sam swear," claiming that his profanity was grander than any music.

A word here about Mark Twain's profanity. Born with a matchless gift of phrase, the printing-office, the river, and the mines had developed it in a rare perfection. To hear him denounce a thing was to experience the fierce, searching delight of galvanic waves. Every characterization seemed the most perfect fit possible until he applied the next. And somehow his profanity was seldom an offense. It was not mere idle swearing; it seemed

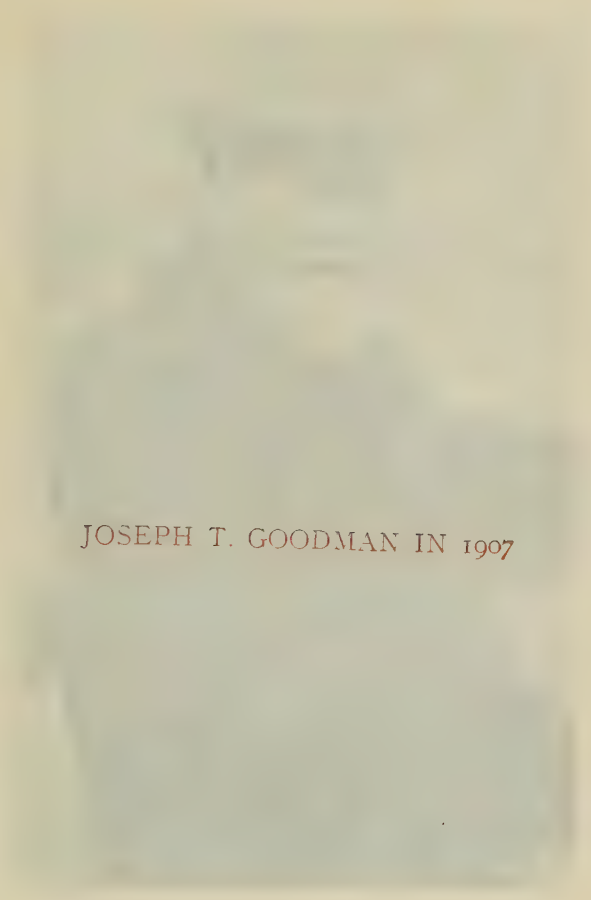
always genuine and serious. His selection of epithet was always dignified and stately, from whatever source—and it might be from the Bible or the gutter. Some one has defined dirt as misplaced matter. It is perhaps the greatest definition ever uttered. It is absolutely universal in its application, and it recurs now, remembering Mark Twain's profanity. For it was rarely misplaced; hence it did not often offend. It seemed, in fact, the safety-valve of his high-pressure intellectual engine. When he had blown off he was always calm, gentle, forgiving, and even tender. Once following an outburst he said, placidly:

"In certain trying circumstances, urgent circumstances, desperate circumstances, profanity furnishes a relief denied even to prayer."

It seems proper to add that it is not the purpose of this work to magnify or modify or excuse that extreme example of humankind which forms its chief subject; but to set him down as he was—inadequately, of course, but with good conscience and clear intent.

Led by Steve Gillis, the *Enterprise* force used to devise tricks to set him going. One of these was to hide articles from his desk. He detested the work necessary to the care of a lamp, and wrote by the light of a candle. To hide "Sam's candle" was a sure way to get prompt and vigorous returns. He would look for it a little, then he would begin a slow, circular walk—a habit acquired in the limitations of the pilot-house—and his denunciation of the thieves was like a great orchestration of wrong. By and by the office boy, supposedly innocent, would find another for him, and all would be forgotten. He made a placard, labeled with fearful threats and anathemas, warning any one against touching his candle; but one night both the placard and the candle were gone.

Now, among his Virginia acquaintances was a young minister, a Mr. Rising, "the fragile, gentle new fledgling" of the Buck Fanshaw episode. Clemens greatly



JOSEPH T. GOODMAN IN 1907

admired Mr. Rising's evident sincerity, and the young minister had quickly recognized the new reporter's superiority of mind. Now and then he came to the office to call on him. Unfortunately, he happened to step in just at that moment when, infuriated by the latest theft of his property, Samuel Clemens was engaged in his rotary denunciation of the criminals, oblivious of every other circumstance. Mr. Rising stood spellbound by this, to him, new phase of genius, and at last his friend became dimly aware of him. He did not halt in his scathing treadmill and continued in the slow monotone of speech:

"I know, Mr. Rising, I know it's wicked to talk like this; I know it is wrong. I know I shall certainly go to hell for it. But if you had a candle, Mr. Rising, and those thieves should carry it off every night, I know that you would say, just as I say, Mr. Rising, G—d d—n their impenitent souls, may they roast in hell for a million years."

The little clergyman caught his breath.

"Maybe I should, Mr. Clemens," he replied, "but I should try to say, 'Forgive them, Father, they know not what they do.'"

"Oh, well! if you put it on the ground that they are just fools, that alters the case, as I am one of that class myself. Come in and we'll try to forgive them and forget about it."[1]

[1] Mark Twain had a good many experiences with young ministers. He was always fond of them, and they often sought him out. Once, long afterward, at a hotel, he wanted a boy to polish his shoes, and had rung a number of times without getting any response. Presently, he thought he heard somebody approaching in the hall outside. He flung open the door, and a small, youngish-looking person, who seemed to have been hesitating at the door, made a movement as though to depart hastily. Clemens grabbed him by the collar.

"Look here," he said, "I've been waiting and ringing here for half an hour. Now I want you to take those shoes, and polish them, quick. Do you hear?"

The slim, youthful person trembled a good deal, and said: "I would, Mr. Clemens, I would indeed, sir, if I could. But I'm a minister of the Gospel, and I'm not prepared for such work."

XXXIX

PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY

THERE was a side to Samuel Clemens that in those days few of his associates saw. This was the poetic, the philosophic, the contemplative side. Joseph Goodman recognized this phase of his character, and, while he perhaps did not regard it as a future literary asset, he delighted in it, and in their hours of quiet association together encouraged its exhibition. It is rather curious that with all his literary penetration Goodman did not dream of a future celebrity for Clemens. He afterward said:

"If I had been asked to prophesy which of the two men, Dan de Quille or Sam, would become distinguished, I should have said De Quille. Dan was talented, industrious, and, for that time and place, brilliant. Of course, I recognized the unusualness of Sam's gifts, but he was eccentric and seemed to lack industry; it is not likely that I should have prophesied fame for him then."

Goodman, like MacFarlane in Cincinnati, half a dozen years before, though by a different method, discovered and developed the deeper vein. Often the two, dining together in a French restaurant, discussed life's subtler philosophies, recalled various phases of human history, remembered and recited the poems that gave them especial enjoyment. "The Burial of Moses," with its noble phrasing and majestic imagery, appealed strongly to Clemens, and he recited it with great power. The first stanza in particular always stirred him, and it stirred his

hearer as well. With eyes half closed and chin lifted, a lighted cigar between his fingers, he would lose himself in the music of the stately lines.

By Nebo's lonely mountain,
On this side Jordan's wave,
In a vale in the land of Moab,
There lies a lonely grave.
And no man knows that sepulchre,
And no man saw it e'er,
For the angels of God upturned the sod,
And laid the dead man there.

Another stanza that he cared for almost as much was the one beginning:

And had he not high honor—
The hill-side for a pall,
To lie in state while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave?

Without doubt he was moved to emulate the simple grandeur of that poem, for he often repeated it in those days, and somewhat later we find it copied into his note-book in full. It would seem to have become to him a sort of literary touchstone; and in some measure it may be regarded as accountable for the fact that in the fullness of time "he made use of the purest English of any modern writer." These are Goodman's words, though William Dean Howells has said them, also, in substance, and Brander Matthews, and many others who know about such things. Goodman adds, "The simplicity and beauty of his style are almost without a parallel, except in the com-

mon version of the Bible," which is also true. One is reminded of what Macaulay said of Milton:

"There would seem at first sight to be no more in his words than in other words. But they are words of enchantment. No sooner are they pronounced than the past is present and the distance near. New forms of beauty start at once into existence, and all the burial-places of the memory give up their dead."

One drifts ahead, remembering these things. The triumph of words, the mastery of phrases, lay all before him at the time of which we are writing now. He was twenty-seven. At that age Rudyard Kipling had reached his meridian. Samuel Clemens was still in the classroom. Everything came as a lesson—phrase, form, aspect, and combination; nothing escaped unvalued. The poetic phase of things particularly impressed him. Once at a dinner with Goodman, when the lamp-light from the chandelier struck down through the claret on the tablecloth in a great red stain, he pointed to it dramatically: "Look, Joe," he said, "the angry tint of wine."

It was at one of these private sessions, late in '62, that Clemens proposed to report the coming meeting of the Carson legislature. He knew nothing of such work and had small knowledge of parliamentary proceedings. Formerly it had been done by a man named Gillespie, but Gillespie was now clerk of the house. Goodman hesitated; then, remembering that whether Clemens got the reports right or not, he would at least make them readable, agreed to let him undertake the work.

XL

"MARK TWAIN"

THE early Nevada legislature was an interesting assembly. All State legislatures are that, and this was a mining frontier. No attempt can be made to describe it. It was chiefly distinguished for a large ignorance of procedure, a wide latitude of speech, a noble appreciation of humor, and plenty of brains. How fortunate Mark Twain was in his schooling, to be kept away from institutional training, to be placed in one after another of those universities of life where the sole curriculum is the study of the native inclinations and activities of mankind! Sometimes, in after-years, he used to regret the lack of systematic training. Well for him—and for us—that he escaped that blight.

For the study of human nature the Nevada assembly was a veritable lecture-room. In it his understanding, his wit, his phrasing, his self-assuredness grew like Jack's bean-stalk, which in time was ready to break through into a land above the sky. He made some curious blunders in his reports, in the beginning; but he was so frank in his ignorance and in his confession of it that the very unsophistication of his early letters became their chief charm. Gillespie coached him on parliamentary matters, and in time the reports became technically as well as artistically good. Clemens in return christened Gillespie "Young Jefferson's Manual," a title which he bore, rather proudly indeed, for many years.

Another "entitlement" growing out of those early

reports, and possibly less satisfactory to its owner, was the one accorded to Clement T. Rice, of the Virginia City *Union*. Rice knew the legislative work perfectly and concluded to poke fun at the *Enterprise* letters.

But this was a mistake. Clemens in his next letter declared that Rice's reports might be parliamentary enough, but that they covered with glittering technicalities the most festering mass of misstatement, and even crime. He avowed that they were wholly untrustworthy, dubbed the author of them "The Unreliable," and in future letters never referred to him by any other term. Carson and the Comstock and the papers of the Coast delighted in this burlesque journalistic warfare, and Rice became "The Unreliable" for life.

Rice and Clemens, it should be said, though rivals, were the best of friends, and there was never any real animosity between them.

Clemens quickly became a favorite with the members; his sharp letters, with their amusing turn of phrase and their sincerity, won general friendship. Jack Simmons, speaker of the house, and Billy Clagget, the Humboldt delegation, were his special cronies and kept him on the inside of the political machine. Clagget had remained in Unionville after the mining venture, married his Keokuk sweetheart, and settled down into politics and law. In due time he would become a leading light and go to Congress. He was already a notable figure, of forceful eloquence and tousled, unkempt hair. Simmons, Clagget, and Clemens were easily the three conspicuous figures of the session.

It must have been gratifying to the former prospector and miner to come back to Carson City a person of consequence, where less than a year before he had been regarded as no more than an amusing indolent fellow, a figure to smile at, but unimportant. There is a photograph extant of Clemens and his friends Clagget and Sim-

mons in a group, and we gather from it that he now arrayed himself in a long broadcloth cloak, a starched shirt, and polished boots. Once more he had become the glass of fashion that he had been on the river. He made his residence with Orion, whose wife and little daughter Jennie had by this time come out from the States. "Sister Mollie," as wife of the acting governor, was presently social leader of the little capital; her brilliant brother-in-law its chief ornament. His merriment and songs and good nature made him a favorite guest. His lines had fallen in pleasant places; he could afford to smile at the hard Esmeralda days.

He was not altogether satisfied. His letters, copied and quoted all along the Coast, were unsigned. They were easily identified with one another, but not with a personality. He realized that to build a reputation it was necessary to fasten it to an individuality, a name.

He gave the matter a good deal of thought. He did not consider the use of his own name; the *nom de plume* was the fashion of the time. He wanted something brief, crisp, definite, unforgettable. He tried over a good many combinations in his mind, but none seemed convincing. Just then—this was early in 1863—news came to him that the old pilot he had wounded by his satire, Isaiah Sellers, was dead. At once the pen-name of Captain Sellers recurred to him. That was it; that was the sort of name he wanted. It was not trivial; it had all the qualities—Sellers would never need it again. Clemens decided he would give it a new meaning and new association in this far-away land. He went up to Virginia City.

"Joe," he said, to Goodman, "I want to sign my articles. I want to be identified to a wider audience."

"All right, Sam. What name do you want to use—'Josh'?"

"No, I want to sign them 'Mark Twain.' It is an old river term, a leads-man's call, signifying two fathoms—

twelve feet. It has a richness about it; it was always a pleasant sound for a pilot to hear on a dark night; it meant safe water."

He did not then mention that Captain Isaiah Sellers had used and dropped the name. He was ashamed of his part in that episode, and the offense was still too recent for confession. Goodman considered a moment:

"Very well, Sam," he said, "that sounds like a good name."

It was indeed a good name. In all the nomenclature of the world no more forceful combination of words could have been selected to express the man for whom they stood. The name Mark Twain is as infinite, as fundamental as that of John Smith, without the latter's wasting distribution of strength. If all the prestige in the name of John Smith were combined in a single individual, its dynamic energy might give it the carrying power of Mark Twain. Let this be as it may, it has proven the greatest *nom de plume* ever chosen—a name exactly in accord with the man, his work, and his career.

It is not surprising that Goodman did not recognize this at the moment. We should not guess the force that lies in a twelve-inch shell if we had never seen one before or heard of its seismic destruction. We should have to wait and see it fired, and take account of the result.

It was first signed to a Carson letter bearing date of February 2, 1863, and from that time was attached to all Samuel Clemens's work. The work was neither better nor worse than before, but it had suddenly acquired identification and special interest. Members of the legislature and friends in Virginia and Carson immediately began to address him as "Mark." The papers of the Coast took it up, and within a period to be measured by weeks he was no longer "Sam" or "Clemens" or "that bright chap on the *Enterprise*," but "Mark"—"Mark Twain." No *nom de plume* was ever so quickly and

generally accepted as that. De Quille, returning from the East after an absence of several months, found his room and desk mate with the distinction of a new name and fame.

It is curious that in the letters to the home folks preserved from that period there is no mention of his new title and its success. In fact, the writer rarely speaks of his work at all, and is more inclined to tell of the mining shares he has accumulated, their present and prospective values. However, many of the letters are undoubtedly missing. Such as have been preserved are rather airy epistles full of his abounding joy of life and good nature. Also they bear evidence of the renewal of his old river habit of sending money home—twenty dollars in each letter, with intervals of a week or so between.

XLI

THE CREAM OF COMSTOCK HUMOR

WITH the adjournment of the legislature, Samuel Clemens returned to Virginia City distinctly a notability—Mark Twain. He was regarded as leading man on the *Enterprise*—which in itself was high distinction on the Comstock—while his improved dress and increased prosperity commanded additional respect. When visitors of note came along—well-known actors, lecturers, politicians—he was introduced as one of the Comstock features which it was proper to see, along with the Ophir and Gould and Curry mines, and the new hundred-stamp quartz-mill.

He was rather grieved and hurt, therefore, when, after several collections had been taken up in the *Enterprise* office to present various members of the staff with meerschaum pipes, none had come to him. He mentioned this apparent slight to Steve Gillis:

"Nobody ever gives me a meerschaum pipe," he said, plaintively. "Don't I deserve one yet?"

Unhappy day! To that remorseless creature, Steve Gillis, this was a golden opportunity for deviltry of a kind that delighted his soul. This is the story, precisely as Gillis himself told it to the writer of these annals more than a generation later:

"There was a German kept a cigar store in Virginia City and always had a fine assortment of meerschaum pipes. These pipes usually cost anywhere from forty to seventy-five dollars.

"One day Denis McCarthy and I were walking by the old German's place, and stopped to look in at the display in the window. Among other things there was one large *imitation* meerschaum with a high bowl and a long stem, marked a dollar and a half.

"I decided that that would be just the pipe for Sam. We went in and bought it, also a very much longer stem. I think the stem alone cost three dollars. Then we had a little German-silver plate engraved with Mark's name on it and by whom presented, and made preparations for the presentation. Charlie Pope [afterward proprietor of Pope's Theater, St. Louis] was playing at the Opera House at the time, and we engaged him to make the presentation speech.

"Then we let in Dan de Quille, Mark's closest friend, to act the part of Judas—to tell Mark privately that he was going to be presented with a fine pipe, so that he could have a speech prepared in reply to Pope's. It was awful low-down in Dan. We arranged to have the affair come off in the saloon beneath the Opera House after the play was over.

"Everything went off handsomely; but it was a pretty remorseful occasion, and some of us had a hang-dog look; for Sam took it in such sincerity, and had prepared one of the most beautiful speeches I ever heard him make. Pope's presentation, too, was beautifully done. He told Sam how his friends all loved him, and that this pipe, purchased at so great an expense, was but a small token of their affection. But Sam's reply, which was supposed to be impromptu, actually brought the tears to the eyes of some of us, and he was interrupted every other minute with applause. I never felt so sorry for anybody.

"Still, we were bent on seeing the thing through. After Sam's speech was finished, he ordered expensive wines—champagne and sparkling Moselle. Then we went

out to do the town, and kept things going until morning to drown our sorrow.

"Well, next day, of course, he started in to color the pipe. It wouldn't color any more than a piece of chalk, which was about all it was. Sam would smoke and smoke, and complain that it didn't seem to taste right, and that it wouldn't color. Finally Denis said to him one day:

"'Oh, Sam, don't you know that's just a damned old egg-shell, and that the boys bought it for a dollar and a half and presented you with it for a joke?'

"Then Sam was furious, and we laid the whole thing on Dan de Quille. He had a thunder-cloud on his face when he started up for the Local Room, where Dan was. He went in and closed the door behind him, and locked it, and put the key in his pocket—an awful sign. Dan was there alone, writing at his table.

"Sam said, 'Dan, did you know, when you invited me to make that speech, that those fellows were going to give me a bogus pipe?'

"There was no way for Dan to escape, and he confessed. Sam walked up and down the floor, as if trying to decide which way to slay Dan. Finally he said:

"'Oh, Dan, to think that you, my dearest friend, who knew how little money I had, and how hard I would work to prepare a speech that would show my gratitude to my friends, should be the traitor, the Judas, to betray me with a kiss! Dan, I never want to look on your face again. You knew I would spend every dollar I had on those pirates when I couldn't afford to spend anything; and yet you let me do it; you aided and abetted their diabolical plan, and you even got me to get up that damned speech to make the thing still more ridiculous.'

"Of course Dan felt terribly, and tried to defend himself by saying that they were really going to present him with a fine pipe—a genuine one, this time. But Sam at first refused to be comforted; and when, a few days

later, I went in with the pipe and said, 'Sam, here's the pipe the boys meant to give you all the time,' and tried to apologize, he looked around a little coldly, and said:

"'Is that another of those bogus old pipes?'

"He accepted it, though, and general peace was restored. One day, soon after, he said to me:

"'Steve, do you know that I think that that bogus pipe smokes about as well as the good one?'"

Many years later (this was in his home at Hartford, and Joe Goodman was present) Mark Twain one day came upon the old imitation pipe.

"Joe," he said, "that was a cruel, cruel trick the boys played on me; but, for the feeling I had during the moment when they presented me with that pipe and when Charlie Pope was making his speech and I was making my reply to it—for the memory of that feeling, now, that pipe is more precious to me than any pipe in the world!"

Eighteen hundred and sixty-three was flood-tide on the Comstock. Every mine was working full blast. Every mill was roaring and crunching, turning out streams of silver and gold. A little while ago an old resident wrote:

> When I close my eyes I hear again the respirations of hoisting-engines and the roar of stamps; I can see the "camels" after midnight packing in salt; I can see again the jam of teams on C Street and hear the anathemas of the drivers—all the mighty work that went on in order to lure the treasures from the deep chambers of the great lode and to bring enlightenment to the desert.

Those were lively times. In the midst of one of his letters home Mark Twain interrupts himself to say: "I have just heard five pistol-shots down the street—as such things are in my line, I will go and see about it," and in a postscript added a few hours later:

5 A.M. The pistol-shot did its work well. One man, a Jackson County Missourian, shot two of my friends (police officers) through the heart—both died within three minutes. The murderer's name is John Campbell.

"Mark and I had our hands full," says De Quille, "and no grass grew under our feet." In answer to some stray criticism of their policy, they printed a sort of editorial manifesto:

Our duty is to keep the universe thoroughly posted concerning murders and street fights, and balls, and theaters, and packtrains, and churches, and lectures, and school-houses, and city military affairs, and highway robberies, and Bible societies, and hay-wagons, and the thousand other things which it is in the province of local reporters to keep track of and magnify into undue importance for the instruction of the readers of a great daily newspaper.

It is easy to recognize Mark Twain's hand in that compendium of labor, which, in spite of its amusing apposition, was literally true, and so intended, probably with no special thought of humor in its construction. It may be said, as well here as anywhere, that it was not Mark Twain's habit to strive for humor. He saw facts at curious angles and phrased them accordingly. In Virginia City he mingled with the turmoil of the Comstock and set down what he saw and thought, in his native speech. The Comstock, ready to laugh, found delight in his expression and discovered a vast humor in his most earnest statements.

On the other hand, there were times when the humor was intended and missed its purpose. We have already recalled the instance of the "Petrified Man" hoax, which was taken seriously; but the "Empire City Massacre" burlesque found an acceptance that even its author considered serious for a time. It is remembered to-day in Virginia City as the chief incident of Mark Twain's Comstock career.

This literary bomb really had two objects, one of which was to punish the San Francisco *Bulletin* for its persistent attacks on Washoe interests; the other, though this was merely incidental, to direct an unpleasant attention to a certain Carson saloon, the Magnolia, which was supposed to dispense whisky of the "forty rod" brand—that is, a liquor warranted to kill at that range. It was the *Bulletin* that was to be made especially ridiculous. This paper had been particularly disagreeable concerning the "dividend-cooking" system of certain of the Comstock mines, at the same time calling invidious attention to safer investments in California stocks. Samuel Clemens, with "half a trunkful" of Comstock shares, had cultivated a distaste for California things in general. In a letter of that time he says:

"How I hate everything that looks or tastes or smells like California!" With his customary fickleness of soul, he was glorifying California less than a year later, but for the moment he could see no good in that Nazareth. To his great satisfaction, one of the leading California corporations, the Spring Valley Water Company, "cooked" a dividend of its own about this time, resulting in disaster to a number of guileless investors who were on the wrong side of the subsequent crash. This afforded an inviting opportunity for reprisal. With Goodman's consent he planned for the California papers, and the *Bulletin* in particular, a punishment which he determined to make sufficiently severe. He believed the papers of that State had forgotten his earlier offenses, and the result would show he was not mistaken.

There was a point on the Carson River, four miles from Carson City, known as "Dutch Nick's," and also as Empire City, the two being identical. There was no forest there of any sort—nothing but sage-brush. In the one cabin there lived a bachelor with no household. Everybody in Virginia and Carson, of course, knew these things.

Mark Twain now prepared a most lurid and graphic account of how one Phillip Hopkins, living "just at the edge of the great pine forest which lies between Empire City and "Dutch Nick's," had suddenly gone insane and murderously assaulted his entire family consisting of his wife and their nine children, ranging in ages from one to nineteen years. The wife had been slain outright, also seven of the children; the other two might recover. The murder had been committed in the most brutal and ghastly fashion, after which Hopkins had scalped his wife, leaped on a horse, cut his own throat from ear to ear, and ridden four miles into Carson City, dropping dead at last in front of the Magnolia saloon, the red-haired scalp of his wife still clutched in his gory hand. The article further stated that the cause of Mr. Hopkins's insanity was pecuniary loss, he having withdrawn his savings from safe Comstock investments and, through the advice of a relative, one of the editors of the San Francisco *Bulletin*, invested them in the Spring Valley Water Company. This absurd tale with startling head-lines appeared in the *Enterprise*, in its issue of October 28, 1863.

It was not expected that any one in Virginia City or Carson City would for a moment take any stock in the wild invention, yet so graphic was it that nine out of ten on first reading never stopped to consider the entire impossibility of the locality and circumstance. Even when these things were pointed out many readers at first refused to confess themselves sold. As for the *Bulletin* and other California papers, they were taken-in completely, and were furious. Many of them wrote and demanded the immediate discharge of its author, announcing that they would never copy another line from the *Enterprise*, or exchange with it, or have further relations with a paper that had Mark Twain on its staff. Citizens were mad, too, and cut off their subscriptions. The joker was in despair.

"Oh, Joe," he said, "I have ruined your business, and

the only reparation I can make is to resign. You can never recover from this blow while I am on the paper."

"Nonsense," replied Goodman. "We can furnish the people with news, but we can't supply them with sense. Only time can do that. The flurry will pass. You just go ahead. We'll win out in the long run."

But the offender was in torture; he could not sleep. "Dan, Dan," he said, "I am being burned alive on both sides of the mountains."

"Mark," said Dan. "It will all blow over. This item of yours will be remembered and talked about when the rest of your *Enterprise* work is forgotten."

Both Goodman and De Quille were right. In a month papers and people had forgotten their humiliation and laughed. "The Dutch Nick Massacre" gave to its perpetrator and to the *Enterprise* an added vogue.[1]

[1] For full text of the "Dutch Nick" hoax see Appendix C, at the end of last volume: also, for a playful poem by Dan de Quille, written on the occasion of one of Mark Twain's absences from Virginia City.

XLII

REPORTORIAL DAYS

REFERENCE has already been made to the fashion among Virginia City papers of permitting reporters to use the editorial columns for ridicule of one another. This custom was especially in vogue during the period when Dan de Quille and Mark Twain and The Unreliable were the shining journalistic lights of the Comstock. Scarcely a week went by that some apparently venomous squib or fling or long burlesque assault did not appear either in the *Union* or the *Enterprise*, with one of those jokers as its author and another as its target. In one of his "home" letters of that year Mark Twain says:

I have just finished writing up my report for the morning paper and giving The Unreliable a column of advice about how to conduct himself in church.

The advice was such as to call for a reprisal, but it apparently made no difference in personal relations, for a few weeks later he is with The Unreliable in San Francisco, seeing life in the metropolis, fairly swimming in its delights, unable to resist reporting them to his mother.

We fag ourselves completely out every day and go to sleep without rocking every night. When I go down Montgomery Street shaking hands with Tom, Dick, and Harry, it is just like being on Main Street in Hannibal and meeting the old familiar faces. I *do hate* to go back to Washoe. We take trips across the bay to Oakland, and down to San Leandro and

Alameda, and we go out to the Willows and Hayes Park and Fort Point, and up to Benicia; and yesterday we were invited out on a yachting excursion, and had a sail in the fastest yacht on the Pacific coast. Rice says: "Oh no—*we* are not having any fun, Mark—oh no—I reckon it's somebody else—it's probably the gentleman in the wagon" (popular slang phrase), and when I invite Rice to the Lick House to dinner the proprietor sends us champagne and claret, and then we *do* put on the most disgusting airs. The Unreliable says our caliber is too light—we can't stand it to be noticed.

Three days later he adds that he is going sorrowfully "to the snows and the deserts of Washoe," but that he has "lived like a lord to make up for two years of privation."

Twenty dollars is inclosed in each of these letters, probably as a bribe to Jane Clemens to be lenient with his prodigalities, which in his youthful love of display he could not bring himself to conceal. But apparently the salve was futile, for in another letter, a month later, he complains that his mother is "slinging insinuations" at him again, such as "where did you get that money" and "the company I kept in San Francisco." He explains:

Why, I sold Wild Cat mining ground that was given me, and my credit was always good at the bank for $2,000 or $3,000, and I never gamble in any shape or manner, and never drink anything stronger than claret and lager-beer, which conduct is regarded as miraculously temperate in this place. As for company, I went in the very best company to be found in San Francisco. I always move in the best society in Virginia and have a reputation to preserve.

He closes by assuring her that he will be more careful in future and that she need never fear but that he will keep her expenses paid. Then he cannot refrain from adding one more item of his lavish life:

"Put in my washing, and it costs me one hundred dollars a month to live."

De Quille had not missed the opportunity of his comrade's absence to pay off some old scores. At the end of the editorial column of the *Enterprise* on the day following his departure he denounced the absent one and his "protégé," The Unreliable, after the intemperate fashion of the day.

It is to be regretted that such scrubs are ever permitted to visit the bay, as the inevitable effect will be to destroy that exalted opinion of the manners and morality of our people which was inspired by the conduct of our senior editor [which is to say, Dan himself].

The diatribe closed with a really graceful poem, and the whole was no doubt highly regarded by the *Enterprise* readers.

What revenge Mark Twain took on his return has not been recorded, but it was probably prompt and adequate; or he may have left it to The Unreliable. It was clearly a mistake, however, to leave his own local work in the hands of that properly named person a little later. Clemens was laid up with a cold, and Rice assured him on his sacred honor that he would attend faithfully to the *Enterprise* locals, along with his own *Union* items. He did this, but he had been nursing old injuries too long. What was Mark Twain's amazement on looking over the *Enterprise* next morning to find under the heading "Apologetic" a statement over his own *nom de plume*, purporting to be an apology for all the sins of ridicule to the various injured ones.

To Mayor Arick, Hon. Wm. Stewart, Marshal Perry, Hon. J. B. Winters, Mr. Olin, and Samuel Wetherill, besides a host of others whom we have ridiculed from behind the shelter of our reportorial position, we say to these gentlemen we acknowl-

edge our faults, and, in all weakness and humility upon our bended marrow bones, we ask their forgiveness, promising that in future we will give them no cause for anything but the best of feeling toward us. To "Young Wilson" and The Unreliable (as we have wickedly termed them), we feel that no apology we can make begins to atone for the many insults we have given them. Toward these gentlemen we have been as mean as a man could be—and we have always prided ourselves on this base quality. We feel that we are the least of all humanity, as it were. We will now go in sack-cloth and ashes for the next forty days.

This in his own paper over his own signature was a body blow; but it had the effect of curing his cold. He was back in the office forthwith, and in the next morning's issue denounced his betrayer.

We are to blame for giving The Unreliable an opportunity to misrepresent us, and therefore refrain from repining to any great extent at the result. We simply claim the right to deny the truth of every statement made by him in yesterday's paper, to annul all apologies he coined as coming from us, and to hold him up to public commiseration as a reptile endowed with no more intellect, no more cultivation, no more Christian principle than animates and adorns the sportive jackass-rabbit of the Sierras. We have done.

These were the things that enlivened Comstock journalism. Once in a boxing bout Mark Twain got a blow on the nose which caused it to swell to an unusual size and shape. He went out of town for a few days, during which De Quille published an extravagant account of his misfortune, describing the nose and dwelling on the absurdity of Mark Twain's ever supposing himself to be a boxer.

De Quille scored heavily with this item, but his own doom was written. Soon afterward he was out riding and was thrown from his horse and bruised considerably.

This was Mark's opportunity. He gave an account of Dan's disaster; then, commenting, he said:

> The idea of a plebeian like Dan supposing he could ever ride a horse! He! why, even the cats and the chickens laughed when they saw him go by. Of course, he would be thrown off. Of course, any well-bred horse wouldn't let a common, underbred person like Dan stay on his back! When they gathered him up he was just a bag of scraps, but they put him together, and you'll find him at his old place in the *Enterprise* office next week, still laboring under the delusion that he's a newspaper man.

The author of *Roughing It* tells of a literary periodical called the *Occidental*, started in Virginia City by a Mr. F. This was the silver-tongued Tom Fitch, of the *Union*, an able speaker and writer, vastly popular on the Coast. Fitch came to Clemens one day and said he was thinking of starting such a periodical and asked him what he thought of the venture. Clemens said:

"You would succeed if any one could, but start a flower-garden on the desert of Sahara; set up hoisting-works on Mount Vesuvius for mining sulphur; start a literary paper in Virginia City; h—l!"

Which was a correct estimate of the situation, and the paper perished with the third issue. It was of no consequence except that it contained what was probably the first attempt at that modern literary abortion, the composite novel. Also, it died too soon to publish Mark Twain's first verses of any pretension, though still of modest merit—"The Aged Pilot Man"—which were thereby saved for *Roughing It.*

Visiting Virginia now, it seems curious that any of these things could have happened there. The Comstock has become little more than a memory; Virginia and Gold Hill are so quiet, so voiceless, as to constitute scarcely an echo of the past. The International Hotel, that once so

splendid edifice, through whose portals the tide of opulent life then ebbed and flowed, is all but deserted now. One may wander at will through its dingy corridors and among its faded fripperies, seeking in vain for attendance or hospitality, the lavish welcome of a vanished day. Those things were not lacking once, and the stream of wealth tossed up and down the stair and billowed up C Street, an ebullient tide of metals and men from which millionaires would be struck out, and individuals known in national affairs. William M. Stewart, who would one day become a United States Senator, was there, an unnoticed unit; and John Mackay and James G. Fair, one a senator by and by, and both millionaires, but poor enough then—Fair with a pick on his shoulder and Mackay, too, at first, though he presently became a mine superintendent. Once in those days Mark Twain banteringly offered to trade businesses with Mackay.

"No," Mackay said, "I can't trade. My business is not worth as much as yours. I have never swindled anybody, and I don't intend to begin now."

Neither of those men could dream that within ten years their names would be international property; that in due course Nevada would propose statues to their memory.

Such things came out of the Comstock; such things spring out of every turbulent frontier.

XLIII

ARTEMUS WARD

MADAME CAPRELL'S warning concerning Mark Twain's health at twenty-eight would seem to have been justified. High-strung and neurotic, the strain of newspaper work and the tumult of the Comstock had told on him. As in later life, he was subject to bronchial colds, and more than once that year he found it necessary to drop all work and rest for a time at Steamboat Springs, a place near Virginia City, where there were boiling springs and steaming fissures in the mountain-side, and a comfortable hotel. He contributed from there sketches somewhat more literary in form than any of his previous work. "Curing a Cold" is a more or less exaggerated account of his ills.[1]

A portion of a playful letter to his mother, written from the springs, still exists.

You have given my vanity a deadly thrust. Behold, I am prone to boast of having the widest reputation as a local editor of any man on the Pacific coast, and you gravely come forward and tell me "if I work hard and attend closely to my business, I may aspire to a place on a big San Francisco daily some day." There's a comment on human vanity for you! Why, blast it, I was under the impression that I could get such a situation as that any time I asked for it. But I don't want

[1] Included in *Sketches New and Old*. "Information for the Million," and "Advice to Good Little Girls," included in the "Jumping Frog" Collection, 1867, but omitted from the *Sketches*, are also believed to belong to this period.

it. No paper in the United States can afford to pay me what my place on the *Enterprise* is worth. If I were not naturally a lazy, idle, good-for-nothing vagabond, I could make it pay me $20,000 a year. But I don't suppose I shall ever be any account. I lead an easy life, though, and I don't care a cent whether school keeps or not. Everybody knows me, and I fare like a prince wherever I go, be it on this side of the mountain or the other. And I am proud to say I am the most conceited ass in the Territory.

You think that picture looks old? Well, I can't help it—in reality I'm not as old as I was when I was eighteen.

Which was a true statement, so far as his general attitude was concerned. At eighteen, in New York and Philadelphia, his letters had been grave, reflective, advisory. Now they were mostly banter and froth, lightly indifferent to the serious side of things, though perhaps only pretendedly so, for the picture did look old. From the shock and circumstance of his brother's death he had never recovered. He was barely twenty-eight. From the picture he might have been a man of forty.

It was that year that Artemus Ward (Charles F. Browne) came to Virginia City. There was a fine opera-house in Virginia, and any attraction that billed San Francisco did not fail to play to the Comstock. Ward intended staying only a few days to deliver his lectures, but the whirl of the Comstock caught him like a maelstrom, and he remained three weeks.

He made the *Enterprise* office his headquarters, and fairly reveled in the company he found there. He and Mark Twain became boon companions. Each recognized in the other a kindred spirit. With Goodman, De Quille, and McCarthy, also E. E. Hingston—Ward's agent, a companionable fellow—they usually dined at Chaumond's, Virginia's high-toned French restaurant.

Those were three memorable weeks in Mark Twain's life. Artemus Ward was in the height of his fame, and he

encouraged his new-found brother-humorist and prophesied great things of him. Clemens, on his side, measured himself by this man who had achieved fame, and perhaps with good reason concluded that Ward's estimate was correct, that he too could win fame and honor, once he got a start. If he had lacked ambition before Ward's visit, the latter's unqualified approval inspired him with that priceless article of equipment. He put his soul into entertaining the visitor during those three weeks; and it was apparent to their associates that he was at least Ward's equal in mental stature and originality. Goodman and the others began to realize that for Mark Twain the rewards of the future were to be measured only by his resolution and ability to hold out. On Christmas eve Artemus lectured in Silver City and afterward came to the *Enterprise* office to give the boys a farewell dinner. The *Enterprise* always published a Christmas carol, and Goodman sat at his desk writing it. He was just finishing as Ward came in:

"Slave, slave," said Artemus. "Come out and let me banish care from you."

They got the boys and all went over to Chaumond's, where Ward commanded Goodman to order the dinner. When the cocktails came on, Artemus lifted his glass and said:

"I give you Upper Canada."

The company rose, drank the toast in serious silence; then Goodman said:

"Of course, Artemus, it's all right, but why did you give us Upper Canada?"

"Because I don't want it myself," said Ward, gravely.

Then began a rising tide of humor that could hardly be matched in the world to-day. Mark Twain had awakened to a fuller power; Artemus Ward was in his prime. They were giants of a race that became extinct when Mark Twain died. The youth, the wine, the whirl of lights and

life, the tumult of the shouting street—it was as if an electric stream of inspiration poured into those two human dynamos and sent them into a dazzling, scintillating whirl. All gone—as evanescent, as forgotten, as the lightnings of that vanished time; out of that vast feasting and entertainment only a trifling morsel remains. Ward now and then asked Goodman why he did not join in the banter. Goodman said:

"I'm preparing a joke, Artemus, but I'm keeping it for the present."

It was near daybreak when Ward at last called for the bill. It was two hundred and thirty-seven dollars.

"What!" exclaimed Artemus.

"*That's* my joke," said Goodman.

"But I was only exclaiming because it was not twice as much," returned Ward.

He paid it amid laughter, and they went out into the early morning air. It was fresh and fine outside, not yet light enough to see clearly. Artemus threw his face up to the sky and said:

"I feel glorious. I feel like walking on roofs."

Virginia was built on the steep hillside, and the eaves of some of the houses almost touched the ground behind them.

"There is your chance, Artemus," Goodman said, pointing to a row of these houses all about of a height.

Artemus grabbed Mark Twain, and they stepped out upon the long string of roofs and walked their full length, arm in arm. Presently the others noticed a lonely policeman cocking his revolver and getting ready to aim in their direction. Goodman called to him:

"Wait a minute. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to shoot those burglars," he said.

"Don't for your life. Those are not burglars. That's Mark Twain and Artemus Ward."

The roof-walkers returned, and the party went down the

street to a corner across from the International Hotel. A saloon was there with a barrel lying in front, used perhaps for a sort of sign. Artemus climbed astride the barrel, and somebody brought a beer-glass and put it in his hand. Virginia City looks out over the Eastward Desert. Morning was just breaking upon the distant range—the scene as beautiful as when the sunrise beams across the plain of Memnon. The city was not yet awake. The only living creatures in sight were the group of belated diners, with Artemus Ward, as King Gambrinus, pouring a libation to the sunrise.

That was the beginning of a week of glory. The farewell dinner became a series. At the close of one convivial session Artemus went to a concert-hall, the "Melodeon," blacked his face, and delivered a speech. He got away from Virginia about the close of the year.

A day or two later he wrote from Austin, Nevada, to his new-found comrade as "My dearest Love," recalling the happiness of his stay:

"I shall always remember Virginia as a bright spot in my existence, as all others must or rather cannot be, as it were."

Then reflectively he adds:

"Some of the finest intellects in the world have been blunted by liquor."

Rare Artemus Ward and rare Mark Twain! If there lies somewhere a place of meeting and remembrance, they have not failed to recall there those closing days of '63.

XLIV

GOVERNOR OF THE "THIRD HOUSE"

WITH Artemus Ward's encouragement, Clemens began to think of extending his audience eastward. The New York *Sunday Mercury* published literary matter. Ward had urged him to try this market, and promised to write a special letter to the editors, introducing Mark Twain and his work. Clemens prepared a sketch of the Comstock variety, scarcely refined in character and full of personal allusion, a humor not suited to the present-day reader. Its general subject was children; it contained some absurd remedies, supposedly sent to his old pilot friend Zeb Leavenworth, and was written as much for a joke on that good-natured soul as for profit or reputation.

"I wrote it especially for Beck Jolly's use," the author declares, in a letter to his mother, "so he could pester Zeb with it."

We cannot know to-day whether Zeb was pestered or not. A faded clipping is all that remains of the incident. As literature the article, properly enough, is lost to the world at large. It is only worth remembering as his metropolitan beginning. Yet he must have thought rather highly of it (his estimation of his own work was always unsafe), for in the letter above quoted he adds:

I cannot write regularly for the *Mercury*, of course, I sha'n't have time. But sometimes I throw off a pearl (there is no self-conceit about that, I beg you to observe) which ought for

the eternal welfare of my race to have a more extensive circulation than is afforded by a local daily paper.

And if Fitzhugh Ludlow (author of the *Hasheesh Eater*) comes your way, treat him well. He published a high encomium upon Mark Twain (the same being eminently just and truthful, I beseech you to believe) in a San Francisco paper. Artemus Ward said that when my gorgeous talents were publicly acknowledged by such high authority I ought to appreciate them myself, leave sage-brush obscurity, and journey to New York with him, as he wanted me to do. But I preferred not to burst upon the New York public too suddenly and brilliantly, so I concluded to remain here.

He was in Carson City when this was written, preparing for the opening of the next legislature. He was beyond question now the most conspicuous figure of the capital; also the most wholesomely respected, for his influence had become very large. It was said that he could control more votes than any legislative member, and with his friends, Simmons and Clagget, could pass or defeat any bill offered. The *Enterprise* was a powerful organ—to be courted and dreaded—and Mark Twain had become its chief tribune. That he was fearless, merciless, and incorruptible, without doubt had a salutary influence on that legislative session. He reveled in his power; but it is not recorded that he ever abused it. He got a bill passed, largely increasing Orion's official fees, but this was a crying need and was so recognized. He made no secret promises, none at all that he did not intend to fulfill. "Sam's word was as fixed as fate," Orion records, and it may be added that he was morally as fearless.

The two Houses of the last territorial legislature of Nevada assembled January 12, 1864.[1] A few days later a "Third House" was organized—an institution quite in keeping with the happy atmosphere of that day and

[1] Nevada became a State October 31, 1864.

locality, for it was a burlesque organization, and Mark Twain was selected as its "Governor."

The new House prepared to make a public occasion of this first session, and its Governor was required to furnish a message. Then it was decided to make it a church benefit. The letters exchanged concerning this proposition still exist; they explain themselves:

CARSON CITY, *January 23, 1864.*

GOV. MARK TWAIN,—Understanding from certain members of the Third House of the territorial Legislature that that body will have effected a permanent organization within a day or two, and be ready for the reception of your Third Annual Message,[1] we desire to ask your permission, and that of the Third House, to turn the affair to the benefit of the Church by charging toll-roads, franchises, and other persons a dollar apiece for the privilege of listening to your communication.

S. PIXLEY,
G. A. SEARS,
Trustees.

CARSON CITY, *January 23, 1864.*

GENTLEMEN,—Certainly. If the public can find anything in a grave state paper worth paying a dollar for, I am willing they should pay that amount, or any other; and although I am not a very dusty Christian myself, I take an absorbing interest in religious affairs, and would willingly inflict my annual message upon the Church itself if it might derive benefit thereby. You can charge what you please; I promise the public no amusement, but I do promise a reasonable amount of instruction. I am responsible to the Third House only, and I hope to be permitted to make it exceedingly warm for that body, without caring whether the sympathies of the public and the Church be enlisted in their favor, and against myself, or not.

Respectfully,
MARK TWAIN.

[1] There had been no former message. This was regarded as a great joke.

Mark Twain's reply is closely related to his later style in phrase and thought. It might have been written by him at almost any subsequent period. Perhaps his association with Artemus Ward had awakened a new perception of the humorous idea—a humor of repression, of understatement. He forgot this often enough, then and afterward, and gave his riotous fancy free rein; but on the whole the simpler, less florid form seemingly began to attract him more and more.

His address as Governor of the Third House has not been preserved, but those who attended always afterward referred to it as the "greatest effort of his life." Perhaps for that audience and that time this verdict was justified.

It was his first great public opportunity. On the stage about him sat the membership of the Third House; the building itself was packed, the aisles full. He knew he could let himself go in burlesque and satire, and he did. He was unsparing in his ridicule of the Governor, the officials in general, the legislative members, and of individual citizens. From the beginning to the end of his address the audience was in a storm of laughter and applause. With the exception of the dinner speech made to the printers in Keokuk, it was his first public utterance —the beginning of a lifelong series of triumphs.

Only one thing marred his success. Little Carrie Pixley, daughter of one of the "trustees," had promised to be present and sit in a box next the stage. It was like him to be fond of the child, and he had promised to send a carriage for her. Often during his address he glanced toward the box; but it remained empty. When the affair was ended, he drove home with her father to inquire the reason. They found the little girl, in all her finery, weeping on the bed. Then he remembered he had forgotten to send the carriage; and that was like him, too.

For his Third House address Judge A. W. (Sandy)

Baldwin and Theodore Winters presented him with a gold watch inscribed to "Governor Mark Twain." He was more in demand now than ever; no social occasion was regarded as complete without him. His doings were related daily and his sayings repeated on the streets. Most of these things have passed away now, but a few are still recalled with smiles. Once, when conundrums were being asked at a party, he was urged to make one.

"Well," he said, "why am I like the Pacific Ocean?"

Several guesses were made, but none satisfied him. Finally all gave it up.

"Tell us, Mark, why *are* you like the Pacific Ocean?"

"I don't know," he drawled. "I was just asking for information."

At another time, when a young man insisted on singing a song of eternal length, the chorus of which was, "I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm going home to-morrow," Mark Twain put his head in the window and said, pleadingly:

"For God's sake go to-night."

But he was also fond of quieter society. Sometimes, after the turmoil of a legislative morning, he would drop in to Miss Keziah Clapp's school and listen to the exercises, or would call on Colonel Curry—"old Curry, old Abe Curry"—and if the colonel happened to be away, he would talk with Mrs. Curry, a motherly soul (still alive at ninety-three, in 1910), and tell her of his Hannibal boyhood or his river and his mining adventures, and keep her laughing until the tears ran.

He was a great pedestrian in those days. Sometimes he walked from Virginia to Carson, stopping at Colonel Curry's as he came in for rest and refreshment.

"Mrs. Curry," he said once, "I have seen tireder men than I am, and lazier men, but they were dead men." He liked the home feeling there—the peace and the

motherly interest. Deep down, he was lonely and homesick; he was always so away from his own kindred.

Clemens returned now to Virginia City, and, like all other men who ever met her, became briefly fascinated by the charms of Adah Isaacs Menken, who was playing Mazeppa at the Virginia Opera House. All men—kings, poets, priests, prize-fighters—fell under Menken's spell. Dan de Quille and Mark Twain entered into a daily contest as to who could lavish the most fervid praise on her in the *Enterprise*. The latter carried her his literary work to criticize. He confesses this in one of his home letters, perhaps with a sort of pride.

> I took it over to show to Miss Menken the actress, Orpheus C. Kerr's wife. She is a literary cuss herself.
>
> She has a beautiful white hand, but her handwriting is infamous; she writes fast and her chirography is of the door-plate order—her letters are immense. I gave her a conundrum, thus:
>
> "My dear madam, why ought your hand to retain its present grace and beauty always? Because you fool away devilish little of it on your manuscript."

But Menken was gone presently, and when he saw her again, somewhat later, in San Francisco, his "madness" would have seemed to have been allayed.

XLV

A COMSTOCK DUEL

THE success—such as it was—of his occasional contributions to the New York *Sunday Mercury* stirred Mark Twain's ambition for a wider field of labor. Circumstance, always ready to meet his wishes, offered assistance, though in an unexpected form.

Goodman, temporarily absent, had left Clemens in editorial charge. As in that earlier day, when Orion had visited Tennessee and returned to find his paper in a hot personal warfare with certain injured citizens, so the *Enterprise*, under the same management, had stirred up trouble. It was just at the time of the "Flour Sack Sanitary Fund," the story of which is related at length in *Roughing It*. In the general hilarity of this occasion, certain *Enterprise* paragraphs of criticism or ridicule had incurred the displeasure of various individuals whose cause naturally enough had been espoused by a rival paper, the *Union*. Very soon the original grievance, whatever it was, was lost sight of in the fireworks and vitriol-throwing of personal recrimination between Mark Twain and the *Union* editor, then a Mr. Laird.

A point had been reached at length when only a call for bloodshed—a challenge—could satisfy either the staff or the readers of the two papers. Men were killed every week for milder things than the editors had spoken each of the other. Joe Goodman himself, not so long before, had fought a duel with a *Union* editor—Tom Fitch—and shot him in the leg, so making of him a friend, and a lame

man, for life. In Joe's absence the prestige of the paper must be maintained.

Mark Twain himself has told in burlesque the story of his duel, keeping somewhat nearer to the fact than was his custom in such writing, as may be seen by comparing it with the account of his abettor and second—of course, Steve Gillis. The account is from Mr. Gillis's own hand:

When Joe went away, he left Sam in editorial charge of the paper. That was a dangerous thing to do. Nobody could ever tell what Sam was going to write. Something he said stirred up Mr. Laird, of the *Union*, who wrote a reply of a very severe kind. He said some things that we told Mark could only be wiped out with blood. Those were the days when almost every man in Virginia City had fought with pistols either impromptu or premeditated duels. I had been in several, but then mine didn't count. Most of them were of the impromptu kind. Mark hadn't had any yet, and we thought it about time that his baptism took place.

He was not eager for it; he was averse to violence, but we finally prevailed upon him to send Laird a challenge, and when Laird did not send a reply at once we insisted on Mark sending him another challenge, by which time he had made himself believe that he really wanted to fight, as much as *we* wanted him to do. Laird concluded to fight, at last. I helped Mark get up some of the letters, and a man who would not fight after such letters did not belong in Virginia City—in those days.

Laird's acceptance of Mark's challenge came along about midnight, I think, after the papers had gone to press. The meeting was to take place next morning at sunrise.

Of course I was selected as Mark's second, and at daybreak I had him up and out for some lessons in pistol practice before meeting Laird. I didn't have to wake him. He had not been asleep. We had been talking since midnight over the duel that was coming. I had been telling him of the different duels in which I had taken part, either as principal or second, and how many men I had helped to kill and bury, and how it was a good plan to make a will, even if one had not much to leave. It always looked well, I told him, and seemed to be a proper

thing to do before going into a duel. So Mark made a will with a sort of gloomy satisfaction, and as soon as it was light enough to see, we went out to a little ravine near the meeting-place, and I set up a board for him to shoot at. He would step out, raise that big pistol, and when I would count three he would shut his eyes and pull the trigger. Of course he didn't hit anything; he did not come anywhere near hitting anything. Just then we heard somebody shooting over in the next ravine. Sam said:

"What's that, Steve?"

"Why," I said, "that's Laird. His seconds are practising him over there."

It didn't make my principal any more cheerful to hear that pistol go off every few seconds over there. Just then I saw a little mud-hen light on some sage-brush about thirty yards away.

"Mark," I said, "let me have that pistol. I'll show you how to shoot."

He handed it to me, and I let go at the bird and shot its head off, clean. About that time Laird and his second came over the ridge to meet us. I saw them coming and handed Mark back the pistol. We were looking at the bird when they came up.

"Who did that?" asked Laird's second.

"Sam," I said.

"How far off was it?"

"Oh, about thirty yards."

"Can he do it again?"

"Of course," I said; "every time. He could do it twice that far."

Laird's second turned to his principal.

"Laird," he said, "you don't want to fight that man. It's just like suicide. You'd better *settle* this thing, now."

So there was a settlement. Laird took back all he had said; Mark said he really had nothing against Laird—the discussion had been purely journalistic and did not need to be settled in blood. He said that both he and Laird were probably the victims of their friends. I remember one of the things Laird said when his second told him he had better not fight.

"Fight! H—l, no! I am not going to be murdered by that d—d desperado."

Sam had sent another challenge to a man named Cutler, who had been somehow mixed up with the muss and had written Sam an insulting letter; but Cutler was out of town at the time, and before he got back we had received word from Jerry Driscoll, foreman of the Grand Jury, that the law just passed, making a duel a penitentiary offense for both principal and second, was to be strictly enforced, and unless we got out of town in a limited number of hours we would be the first examples to test the new law.

We concluded to go, and when the stage left next morning for San Francisco we were on the outside seat. Joe Goodman had returned by this time and agreed to accompany us as far as Henness Pass. We were all in good spirits and glad we were alive, so Joe did not stop when he got to Henness Pass, but kept on. Now and then he would say, "Well, I had better be going back pretty soon," but he didn't go, and in the end he did not go back at all, but went with us clear to San Francisco, and we had a royal good time all the way. I never knew any series of duels to close so happily.

So ended Mark Twain's career on the Comstock. He had come to it a weary pilgrim, discouraged and unknown; he was leaving it with a new name and fame—elate, triumphant, even if a fugitive.

XLVI

GETTING SETTLED IN SAN FRANCISCO

THIS was near the end of May, 1864. The intention of both Gillis and Clemens was to return to the States; but once in San Francisco both presently accepted places, Clemens as reporter and Gillis as compositor, on the *Morning Call*.

From *Roughing It* the reader gathers that Mark Twain now entered into a life of butterfly idleness on the strength of prospective riches to be derived from the "half a trunkful of mining stocks," and that presently, when the mining bubble exploded, he was a pauper. But a good many liberties have been taken with the history of this period. Undoubtedly he expected opulent returns from his mining stocks, and was disappointed, particularly in an investment in Hale and Norcross shares, held too long for the large profit which could have been made by selling at the proper time.

The fact is, he spent not more than a few days—a fortnight at most—in "butterfly idleness," at the Lick House before he was hard at work on the *Call*, living modestly with Steve Gillis in the quietest place they could find, never quiet enough, but as far as possible from dogs and cats and chickens and pianos, which seemed determined to make the mornings hideous, when a weary night reporter and compositor wanted to rest. They went out socially, on occasion, arrayed in considerable elegance; but their recreations were more likely to consist of private midnight orgies, after the paper had gone to press—mild

dissipations in whatever they could find to eat at that hour, with a few glasses of beer, and perhaps a game of billiards or pool in some all-night resort. A printer by the name of Ward—"Little Ward,"[1] they called him—often went with them for these refreshments. Ward and Gillis were both bantam game-cocks, and sometimes would stir up trouble for the very joy of combat. Clemens never cared for that sort of thing and discouraged it, but Ward and Gillis were for war. "They never assisted each other. If one had offered to assist the other against some overgrown person, it would have been an affront, and a battle would have followed between that pair of little friends."[2] Steve Gillis, in particular, was fond of incidental encounters, a characteristic which would prove an important factor somewhat later in shaping Mark Twain's career. Of course, the more strenuous nights were not frequent. Their home-going was usually tame enough and they were glad enough to get there.

Clemens, however, was never quite ready for sleep. Then, as ever, he would prop himself up in bed, light his pipe, and lose himself in English or French history until sleep conquered. His room-mate did not approve of this habit; it interfered with his own rest, and with his fiendish tendency to mischief he found reprisal in his own fashion. Knowing his companion's highly organized nervous system he devised means of torture which would induce him to put out the light. Once he tied a nail to a string, an arrangement which he kept on the floor behind the bed. Pretending to be asleep, he would hold the end of the string, and lift it gently up and down, making a slight ticking sound on the floor, maddening to a nervous man. Clemens would listen a moment and say:

"What in the nation *is that noise?*"

[1] L. P. Ward; well known as an athlete in San Francisco. He lost his mind and fatally shot himself in 1903.

[2] S. L. C., 1906.

Gillis's pretended sleep and the ticking would continue.

Clemens would sit up in bed, fling aside his book, and swear violently.

"Steve, what *is* that d—d noise?" he would say.

Steve would pretend to rouse sleepily.

"What's the matter, Sam? What noise? Oh, I guess that is one of those death-ticks; they don't like the light. Maybe it will stop in a minute."

It usually did stop about that time, and the reading would be apt to continue. But no sooner was there stillness than it began again—tick, tick, tick. With a wild explosion of blasphemy, the book would go across the floor and the light would disappear. Sometimes, when he couldn't sleep, he would dress and walk out in the street for an hour, while the cruel Steve slept like the criminal that he was.

At last, one night, he overdid the thing and was caught. His tortured room-mate at first reviled him, then threatened to kill him, finally put him to shame. It was curious, but they always loved each other, those two; there was never anything resembling an estrangement, and to his last days Mark Twain never could speak of Steve Gillis without tenderness.

They moved a great many times in San Francisco. Their most satisfactory residence was on a bluff on California Street. Their windows looked down on a lot of Chinese houses—"tin-can houses," they were called—small wooden shanties covered with beaten-out cans. Steve and Mark would look down on these houses, waiting until all the Chinamen were inside; then one of them would grab an empty beer-bottle, throw it down on the tin-can roofs, and dodge behind the blinds. The Chinamen would swarm out and look up at the row of houses on the edge of the bluff, shake their fists, and pour out Chinese vituperation. By and by, when they had retired and

everything was quiet again, their tormentors would throw another bottle. This was their Sunday amusement.

At a place on Minna Street they lived with a private family. At first Clemens was delighted.

"Just look at it, Steve," he said. "What a nice, quiet place. Not a thing to disturb us."

But next morning a dog began to howl. Gillis woke this time, to find his room-mate standing in the door that opened out into a back garden, holding a big revolver, his hand shaking with cold and excitement.

"Come here, Steve," he said. "Come here and kill him. I'm so chilled through I can't get a bead on him."

"Sam," said Steve, "don't shoot him. Just swear at him. You can easily kill him at that range with your profanity."

Steve Gillis declares that Mark Twain then let go such a scorching, singeing blast that the brute's owner sold him next day for a Mexican hairless dog.

We gather that they moved, on an average, about once a month. A home letter of September 25, 1864, says:

> We have been here only four months, yet we have changed our lodging five times. We are very comfortably fixed where we are now and have no fault to find with the rooms or the people. We are the only lodgers—in a well-to-do private family. . . . But I need change and must move again.

This was the Minna Street place—the place of the dog. In the same letter he mentions having made a new arrangement with the *Call*, by which he is to receive twenty-five dollars a week, with no more night-work; he says further that he has closed with the *Californian* for weekly articles at twelve dollars each.

XLVII

BOHEMIAN DAYS

MARK TWAIN'S position on the *Call* was uncongenial from the start. San Francisco was a larger city than Virginia; the work there was necessarily more impersonal, more a routine of news-gathering and drudgery. He once set down his own memories of it:

> At nine in the morning I had to be at the police court for an hour and make a brief history of the squabbles of the night before. They were usually between Irishmen and Irishmen, and Chinamen and Chinamen, with now and then a squabble between the two races, for a change.
>
> During the rest of the day we raked the town from end to end, gathering such material as we might, wherewith to fill our required columns; and if there were no fires to report, we started some. At night we visited the six theaters, one after the other, seven nights in the week. We remained in each of those places five minutes, got the merest passing glimpse of play and opera, and with that for a text we "wrote up" those plays and operas, as the phrase goes, torturing our souls every night in the effort to find something to say about those performances which we had not said a couple of hundred times before.
>
> It was fearful drudgery—soulless drudgery—and almost destitute of interest. It was an awful slavery for a lazy man.

On the *Enterprise* he had been free, with a liberty that amounted to license. He could write what he wished, and was personally responsible to the readers. On the *Call* he was simply a part of a news-machine; restricted by a policy, the whole a part of a still greater machine—

politics. Once he saw some butchers set their dogs on an unoffending Chinaman, a policeman looking on with amused interest. He wrote an indignant article criticizing the city government and raking the police. In Virginia City this would have been a welcome delight; in San Francisco it did not appear.

At another time he found a policeman asleep on his beat. Going to a near-by vegetable stall he borrowed a large cabbage-leaf, came back and stood over the sleeper, gently fanning him. It would be wasted effort to make an item of this incident; but he could publish it in his own fashion. He stood there fanning the sleeping official until a large crowd collected. When he thought it was large enough he went away. Next day the joke was all over the city.

Only one of the several severe articles he wrote criticizing officials and institutions seems to have appeared—an attack on an undertaker whose establishment formed a branch of the coroner's office. The management of this place one day refused information to a *Call* reporter, and the next morning its proprietor was terrified by a scathing denunciation of his firm. It began, "Those body-snatchers" and continued through half a column of such scorching strictures as only Mark Twain could devise. The *Call's* policy of suppression evidently did not include criticisms of deputy coroners.

Such liberty, however, was too rare for Mark Twain, and he lost interest. He confessed afterward that he became indifferent and lazy, and that George E. Barnes, one of the publishers of the *Call*, at last allowed him an assistant. He selected from the counting-room a big, hulking youth by the name of McGlooral, with the acquired prefix of "Smiggy." Clemens had taken a fancy to Smiggy McGlooral—on account of his name and size perhaps—and Smiggy, devoted to his patron, worked like a slave gathering news nights—daytimes, too, if necessary—all of which was demoralizing to a man who had small appe-

tite for his place anyway. It was only a question of time when Smiggy alone would be sufficient for the job.

There were other and pleasanter things in San Francisco. The personal and literary associations were worth while. At his right hand in the *Call* office sat Frank Soule—a gentle spirit—a graceful versifier who believed himself a poet. Mark Twain deferred to Frank Soule in those days. He thought his verses exquisite in their workmanship; a word of praise from Soule gave him happiness. In a luxurious office up-stairs was another congenial spirit—a gifted, handsome fellow of twenty-four, who was secretary of the Mint, and who presently became editor of a new literary weekly, the *Californian*, which Charles Henry Webb had founded. This young man's name was Francis Bret Harte, originally from Albany, later a miner and school-teacher on the Stanislaus, still later a compositor, finally a contributor, on the *Golden Era*. His fame scarcely reached beyond San Francisco as yet; but among the little coterie of writing folk that clustered about the *Era* office his rank was high. Mark Twain fraternized with Bret Harte and the *Era* group generally. He felt that he had reached the land—or at least the borderland—of Bohemia, that *Ultima Thule* of every young literary dream.

San Francisco did, in fact, have a very definite literary atmosphere and a literature of its own. Its coterie of writers had drifted from here and there, but they had merged themselves into a California body-poetic, quite as individual as that of Cambridge, even if less famous, less fortunate in emoluments than the Boston group. Joseph E. Lawrence, familiarly known as "Joe" Lawrence, was editor of the *Golden Era*,[1] and his kindness and hospitality were accounted sufficient rewards even when his pecuniary acknowledgments were modest enough. He had a hand-

[1] The *Golden Era*, California's first literary publication, was founded by Rollin M. Daggett and J. McDonough Foard in 1852.

some office, and the literati, local and visiting, used to gather there. Names that would be well known later were included in that little band. Joaquin Miller recalls from an old diary, kept by him then, having seen Adah Isaacs Menken, Prentice Mulford, Bret Harte, Charles Warren Stoddard, Fitzhugh Ludlow, Mark Twain, Orpheus C. Kerr, Artemus Ward, Gilbert Densmore, W. S. Kendall, and Mrs. Hitchcock assembled there at one time. The *Era* office would seem to have been a sort of Mount Olympus, or Parnassus, perhaps; for these were mainly poets, who had scarcely yet attained to the dignity of gods. Miller was hardly more than a youth then, and this grand assemblage impressed him, as did the imposing appointments of the place.

> The *Era* rooms were elegant [he says], the most grandly carpeted and most gorgeously furnished that I have ever seen. Even now in my memory they seem to have been simply palatial. I have seen the world well since then—all of its splendors worth seeing—yet those carpeted parlors, with Joe Lawrence and his brilliant satellites, outshine all things else, as I turn to look back.

More than any other city west of the Alleghanies, San Francisco has always been a literary center; and certainly that was a remarkable group to be out there under the sunset, dropped down there behind the Sierras, which the transcontinental railway would not climb yet, for several years. They were a happy-hearted, aspiring lot, and they got as much as five dollars sometimes for an *Era* article, and were as proud of it as if it had been a great deal more. They felt that they were creating literature, as they were, in fact; a new school of American letters mustered there.

Mark Twain and Bret Harte were distinctive features of this group. They were already recognized by their associates as belonging in a class by themselves, though as yet neither had done any of the work for which he

would be remembered later. They were a good deal together, and it was when Harte was made editor of the *Californian* that Mark Twain was put on the weekly staff at the then unexampled twelve-dollar rate. The *Californian* made larger pretensions than the *Era*, and perhaps had a heavier financial backing. With Mark Twain on the staff and Bret Harte in the chair, himself a frequent contributor, it easily ranked as first of San Francisco periodicals. A number of the sketches collected by Webb later, in Mark Twain's first little volume, the *Celebrated Jumping Frog, Etc.*, appeared in the *Era* or *Californian* in 1864 and 1865. They were smart, bright, direct, not always refined, but probably the best humor of the day. Some of them are still preserved in this volume of sketches. They are interesting in what they promise, rather than in what they present, though some of them are still delightful enough. "The Killing of Julius Cæsar Localized" is an excellent forerunner of his burlesque report of a gladiatorial combat in *The Innocents Abroad*. The *Answers to Correspondents*, with his vigorous admonition of the statistical moralist, could hardly have been better done at any later period. The *Jumping Frog* itself was not originally of this harvest. It has a history of its own, as we shall see a little further along.

The reportorial arrangement was of brief duration. Even the great San Francisco earthquake of that day did not awaken in Mark Twain any permanent enthusiasm for the drudgery of the *Call*. He had lost interest, and when Mark Twain lost interest in a subject or an undertaking that subject or that undertaking were better dead, so far as he was concerned. His conclusion of service with the *Call* was certain, and he wondered daily why it was delayed so long. The connection had become equally unsatisfactory to proprietor and employee. They had a heart-to-heart talk presently, with the result

that Mark Twain was free. He used to claim, in after-years, with his usual tendency to confess the worst of himself, that he was discharged, and the incident has been variously told. George Barnes himself has declared that Clemens resigned with great willingness. It is very likely that the paragraph at the end of Chapter LVIII in *Roughing It* presents the situation with fair accuracy, though, as always, the author makes it as unpleasant for himself as possible:

"At last one of the proprietors took me aside, with a charity I still remember with considerable respect, and gave me an opportunity to resign my berth, and so save myself the disgrace of a dismissal."

As an extreme contrast with the supposititious "butterfly idleness" of his beginning in San Francisco, and for no other discoverable reason, he doubtless thought it necessary, in the next chapter of that book, to depict himself as having reached the depths of hard luck, debt, and poverty.

"I became an adept at slinking," he says. "I slunk from back street to back street. . . . I slunk to my bed. I had pawned everything but the clothes I had on."

This is pure fiction. That he occasionally found himself short of funds is likely enough—a literary life invites that sort of thing—but that he ever clung to a single "silver ten-cent piece," as he tells us, and became the familiar of mendicancy, was a condition supplied altogether by his later imagination to satisfy what he must have regarded as an artistic need. Almost immediately following his separation from the *Call* he arranged with Goodman to write a daily letter for the *Enterprise*, reporting San Francisco matters after his own notion with a free hand. His payment for this work was thirty dollars a week, and he had an additional return from his literary sketches. The arrangement was an improvement both as to labor and income.

Real affluence appeared on the horizon just then, in the form of a liberal offer for the Tennessee land. But alas! it was from a wine-grower who wished to turn the tract into great vineyards, and Orion had a prohibition seizure at the moment, so the trade was not made. Orion further argued that the prospective purchaser would necessarily be obliged to import horticultural labor from Europe, and that those people might be homesick, badly treated, and consequently unhappy in those far eastern Tennessee mountains. Such was Orion's way.

XLVIII

THE REFUGE OF THE HILLS

THOSE who remember Mark Twain's *Enterprise* letters (they are no longer obtainable) declare them to have been the greatest series of daily philippics ever written. However this may be, it is certain that they made a stir. Goodman permitted him to say absolutely what he pleased upon any subject. San Francisco was fairly weltering in corruption, official and private. He assailed whatever came first to hand with all the fierceness of a flaming indignation long restrained.

Quite naturally he attacked the police, and with such ferocity and penetration that as soon as copies of the *Enterprise* came from Virginia the City Hall began to boil and smoke and threaten trouble. Martin G. Burke, then chief of police, entered libel suit against the *Enterprise*, prodigiously advertising that paper, copies of which were snatched as soon as the stage brought them.

Mark Twain really let himself go then. He wrote a letter that on the outside was marked, "Be sure and let Joe see this before it goes in." He even doubted himself whether Goodman would dare to print it, after reading. It was a letter describing the city's corrupt morals under the existing police government. It began, "The air is full of lechery, and rumors of lechery," and continued in a strain which made even the *Enterprise* printers aghast.

"You can never afford to publish that," the foreman said to Goodman.

"Let it all go in, every word," Goodman answered. "If Mark can stand it, I can."

It seemed unfortunate (at the time) that Steve Gillis should select this particular moment to stir up trouble that would involve both himself and Clemens with the very officials which the latter had undertaken to punish. Passing a saloon one night alone, Gillis heard an altercation going on inside, and very naturally stepped in to enjoy it. Including the barkeeper, there were three against two. Steve ranged himself on the weaker side, and selected the barkeeper, a big bruiser, who, when the fight was over, was ready for the hospital. It turned out that he was one of Chief Burke's minions, and Gillis was presently indicted on a charge of assault with intent to kill. He knew some of the officials in a friendly way, and was advised to give a straw bond and go into temporary retirement. Clemens, of course, went his bail, and Steve set out for Virginia City, until the storm blew over.

This was Burke's opportunity. When the case was called and Gillis did not appear, Burke promptly instituted an action against his bondsman, with an execution against his loose property. The watch that had been given him as Governor of the Third House came near being thus sacrificed in the cause of friendship, and was only saved by skilful manipulation.

Now, it was down in the chain of circumstances that Steve Gillis's brother, James N. Gillis, a gentle-hearted hermit, a pocket-miner of the halcyon Tuolumne district—the Truthful James of Bret Harte—happened to be in San Francisco at this time, and invited Clemens to return with him to the far seclusion of his cabin on Jackass Hill. In that peaceful retreat were always rest and refreshment for the wayfarer, and more than one weary writer besides Bret Harte had found shelter there. James Gillis himself had fine literary instincts, but he remained a pocket-miner because he loved that quiet pursuit of gold, the Arcadian life, the companionship of his books, the occasional Bohemian pilgrim who found

refuge in his retreat. It is said that the sick were made well, and the well made better, in Jim Gillis's cabin on the hilltop, where the air was nectar and the stillness like enchantment. One could mine there if he wished to do so; Jim would always furnish him a promising claim, and teach him the art of following the little fan-like drift of gold specks to the nested deposit of nuggets somewhere up the hillside. He regularly shared his cabin with one Dick Stoker (Dick Baker, of *Roughing It*), another genial soul who long ago had retired from the world to this forgotten land, also with Dick's cat, Tom Quartz; but there was always room for guests.

In *Roughing It*, and in a later story, "The Californian's Tale," Mark Twain has made us acquainted with the verdant solitude of the Tuolumne hills, that dreamy, delicious paradise where once a vast population had gathered when placer-mining had been in its bloom, a dozen years before. The human swarm had scattered when the washings failed to pay, leaving only a quiet emptiness and the few pocket-miners along the Stanislaus and among the hills. Vast areas of that section present a strange appearance to-day. Long stretches there are, crowded and jammed and drifted with ghostly white stones that stand up like fossils of a prehistoric life—the earth deposit which once covered them entirely washed away, every particle of it removed by the greedy hordes, leaving only this vast bleaching drift, literally the "picked bones of the land." At one place stands Columbia, regarded once as a rival to Sacramento, a possible State capital—a few tumbling shanties now—and a ruined church.

It was the 4th of December, 1864, when Mark Twain arrived at Jim Gillis's cabin. He found it a humble habitation made of logs and slabs, partly sheltered by a great live-oak tree, surrounded by a stretch of grass. It had not much in the way of pretentious furniture, but there was a large fireplace, and a library which included the

standard authors. A younger Gillis boy, William, was there at this time, so that the family numbered five in all, including Tom Quartz, the cat. On rainy days they would gather about the big, open fire and Jim Gillis, with his back to the warmth, would relate diverting yarns, creations of his own, turned out hot from the anvil, forged as he went along. He had a startling imagination, and he had fostered it in that secluded place. His stories usually consisted of wonderful adventures of his companion, Dick Stoker, portrayed with humor and that serene and vagrant fancy which builds as it goes, careless as to whither it is proceeding and whether the story shall end well or ill, soon or late, if ever. He always pretended that these extravagant tales of Stoker were strictly true; and Stoker—"forty-six and gray as a rat"—earnest, thoughtful, and tranquilly serene, would smoke and look into the fire and listen to those astonishing things of himself, smiling a little now and then but saying never a word. What did it matter to him? He had no world outside of the cabin and the hills, no affairs; he would live and die there; his affairs all had ended long ago.

A number of the stories used in Mark Twain's books were first told by Jim Gillis, standing with his hands crossed behind him, back to the fire, in the cabin on Jackass Hill. The story of Dick Baker's cat was one of these; the Jaybird and Acorn story of *A Tramp Abroad* was another; also the story of the "Burning Shame," and there are others. Mark Twain had little to add to these stories; in fact, he never could get them to sound as well, he said, as when Jim Gillis had told them.

James Gillis's imagination sometimes led him into difficulties. Once a feeble old squaw came along selling some fruit that looked like green plums. Stoker, who knew the fruit well enough, carelessly ventured the remark that it might be all right, but he had never heard of anybody eating it, which set Gillis off into eloquent

praises of its delights, all of which he knew to be purely imaginary; whereupon Stoker told him if he liked the fruit so well, to buy some of it. There was no escape after that; Jim had to buy some of those plums, whose acid was of the hair-lifting aqua-fortis variety, and all the rest of the day he stewed them, adding sugar, trying to make them palatable, tasting them now and then, boasting meanwhile of their nectar-like deliciousness. He gave the others a taste by and by—a withering, corroding sup—and they derided him and rode him down. But Jim never weakened. He ate that fearful brew, and though for days his mouth was like fire he still referred to the luscious health-giving joys of the "Californian plums."

Jackass Hill was not altogether a solitude; here and there were neighbors. Another pocket-miner, named Carrington, had a cabin not far away, and a mile or two distant lived an old couple with a pair of pretty daughters, so plump and trim and innocent, that they were called the "Chapparal Quails." Young men from far and near paid court to them, and on Sunday afternoons so many horses would be tied to their front fence as to suggest an afternoon service there. Young "Billy" Gillis knew them, and one Sunday morning took his brother's friend, Sam Clemens, over for a call. They went early, with forethought, and promptly took the girls for a walk. They took a long walk, and went wandering over the hills, toward Sandy Bar and the Stanislaus—through that reposeful land which Bret Harte would one day light with idyllic romance—and toward evening found themselves a long way from home. They must return by the nearest way to arrive before dark. One of the young ladies suggested a short cut through the Chemisal, and they started. But they were lost, presently, and it was late, very late, when at last they reached the ranch. The mother of the "Quails" was sitting up for

them, and she had something to say. She let go a perfect storm of general denunciation, then narrowed the attack to Samuel Clemens as the oldest of the party. He remained mildly serene.

"It wasn't my fault," he ventured at last; "it was Billy Gillis's fault."

"No such thing. You know better. Mr. Gillis has been here often. It was you."

"But do you realize, ma'am, how tired and hungry we are? Haven't you got a bite for us to eat?"

"No, sir, not a bite—for such as you."

The offender's eyes, wandering about the room, spied something in a corner.

"Isn't that a guitar over there?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, it is; what of it?"

The culprit walked over, and taking it up, tuned the strings a little and struck the chords. Then he began to sing. He began very softly and sang "Fly Away, Pretty Moth," then "Araby's Daughter." He could sing very well in those days, following with the simpler chords. Perhaps the mother "Quail" had known those songs herself back in the States, for her manner grew kindlier, almost with the first notes. When he had finished she was the first to ask him to go on.

"I suppose you are just like all young folks," she said. "I was young myself once. While you sing I'll get some supper."

She left the door to the kitchen open so that she could hear, and cooked whatever she could find for the belated party.

XLIX

THE JUMPING FROG

IT was the rainy season, the winter of 1864 and 1865, but there were many pleasant days, when they could go pocket-hunting, and Samuel Clemens soon added a knowledge of this fascinating science to his other acquirements. Sometimes he worked with Dick Stoker, sometimes with one of the Gillis boys. He did not make his fortune at pocket-mining; he only laid its corner-stone. In the old note-book he kept of that sojourn we find that, with Jim Gillis, he made a trip over into Calaveras County soon after Christmas and remained there until after New Year's, probably prospecting; and he records that on New Year's night, at Vallecito, he saw a magnificent lunar rainbow in a very light, drizzling rain. A lunar rainbow is one of the things people seldom see. He thought it an omen of good-fortune.

They returned to the cabin on the hill; but later in the month, on the 23d, they crossed over into Calaveras again, and began pocket-hunting not far from Angel's Camp. The note-book records that the bill of fare at the Camp hotel consisted wholly of beans and something which bore the name of coffee; also that the rains were frequent and heavy.

January 27. Same old diet—same old weather—went out to the pocket-claim—had to rush back.

They had what they believed to be a good claim. Jim Gillis declared the indications promising, and if they could

only have good weather to work it, they were sure of rich returns. For himself, he would have been willing to work, rain or shine. Clemens, however, had different views on the subject. His part was carrying water for washing out the pans of dirt, and carrying pails of water through the cold rain and mud was not very fascinating work. Dick Stoker came over before long to help. Things went a little better then; but most of their days were spent in the bar-room of the dilapidated tavern at Angel's Camp, enjoying the company of a former Illinois River pilot, Ben Coon,[1] a solemn, fat-witted person, who dozed by the stove, or told slow, endless stories, without point or application. Listeners were a boon to him, for few came and not many would stay. To Mark Twain and Jim Gillis, however, Ben Coon was a delight. It was soothing and comfortable to listen to his endless narratives, told in that solemn way, with no suspicion of humor. Even when his yarn had a point, he did not recognize it. One dreary afternoon, in his slow, monotonous fashion, he told them about a frog—a frog that had belonged to a man named Coleman, who trained it to jump, but that failed to win a wager because the owner of a rival frog had surreptitiously loaded the trained jumper with shot. The story had circulated among the camps, and a well-known journalist, named Samuel Seabough, had already made a squib of it, but neither Clemens nor Gillis had ever happened to hear it before. They thought the tale in itself amusing, and the "spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling was exquisitely absurd." When Coon had talked himself out, his hearers played billiards on the frowsy

[1] This name has been variously given as "Ros Coon," "Coon Drayton," etc. It is given here as set down in Mark Twain's notes, made on the spot. Coon was not (as has been stated) the proprietor of the hotel (which was kept by a Frenchman), but a frequenter of it.

table, and now and then one would remark to the other:

"I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog," and perhaps the other would answer:

"I ain't got no frog, but if I had a frog I'd bet you."

Out on the claim, between pails of water, Clemens, as he watched Jim Gillis or Dick Stoker "washing," would be apt to say, "I don't see no p'ints about that pan o' dirt that's any better'n any other pan o' dirt," and so they kept it up.

Then the rain would come again and interfere with their work. One afternoon, when Clemens and Gillis were following certain tiny-sprayed specks of gold that were leading to a pocket somewhere up the long slope, the chill downpour set in. Gillis, as usual, was washing, and Clemens carrying water. The "color" was getting better with every pan, and Jim Gillis believed that now, after their long waiting, they were to be rewarded. Possessed with the miner's passion, he would have gone on washing and climbing toward the precious pocket, regardless of everything. Clemens, however, shivering and disgusted, swore that each pail of water was his last. His teeth were chattering and he was wet through. Finally he said, in his deliberate way:

"Jim, I won't carry any more water. This work is too lisagreeable."

Gillis had just taken out a panful of dirt.

"Bring one more pail, Sam," he pleaded.

"Oh, hell, Jim, I won't do it; I'm freezing!"

"Just one more pail, Sam," he pleaded.

"No, sir, not a drop, not if I knew there were a million dollars in that pan."

Gillis tore a page out of his note-book, and hastily posted a thirty-day claim notice by the pan of dirt, and they set out for Angel's Camp. It kept on raining and storming, and they did not go back. A few days later

a letter from Steve Gillis made Clemens decide to return to San Francisco. With Jim Gillis and Dick Stoker he left Angel's and walked across the mountains to Jackass Hill in the snow-storm—"the first I ever saw in California," he says in his notes.

In the mean time the rain had washed away the top of the pan of earth they had left standing on the hillside, and exposed a handful of nuggets—pure gold. Two strangers, Austrians, had come along and, observing it, had sat down to wait until the thirty-day claim notice posted by Jim Gillis should expire. They did not mind the rain—not with all that gold in sight—and the minute the thirty days were up they followed the lead a few pans farther and took out—some say ten, some say twenty, thousand dollars. In either case it was a good pocket. Mark Twain missed it by one pail of water. Still, it is just as well, perhaps, when one remembers that vaster nugget of Angel's Camp—the Jumping Frog. Jim Gillis always declared, "If Sam had got that pocket he would have remained a pocket-miner to the end of his days, like me."

In Mark Twain's old note-book occurs a memorandum of the frog story—a mere casual entry of its main features:

Coleman with his jumping frog—bet stranger $50—stranger had no frog, and C. got him one:—in the mean time stranger filled C.'s frog full of shot and he couldn't jump. The stranger's frog won.

It seemed unimportant enough, no doubt, at the time; but it was the nucleus around which was built a surpassing fame. The hills along the Stanislaus have turned out some wonderful nuggets in their time, but no other of such size as that.

L

BACK TO THE TUMULT

From the note-book:

February 25. Arrived in Stockton 5 P.M. Home again—home again at the Occidental Hotel, San Francisco—find letters from Artemus Ward asking me to write a sketch for his new book of Nevada Territory Travels which is soon to come out. Too late—ought to have got the letters three months ago. They are dated early in November.

He was sorry not to oblige Ward, sorry also not to have representation in his book. He wrote explaining the circumstance, and telling the story of his absence. Steve Gillis, meantime, had returned to San Francisco, and settled his difficulties there. The friends again took up residence together.

Mark Twain resumed his daily letters to the *Enterprise*, without further annoyance from official sources. Perhaps there was a temporary truce in that direction, though he continued to attack various abuses—civic, private, and artistic—becoming a sort of general censor, establishing for himself the title of the "Moralist of the Main." The letters were reprinted in San Francisco and widely read. Now and then some one had the temerity to answer them, but most of his victims maintained a discreet silence. In one of these letters he told of the Mexican oyster, a rather tough, unsatisfactory article of diet, which could not stand criticism, and presently disappeared from the market. It was a mistake, however, for him to attack

an Alta journalist by the name of Evans. Evans was a poet, and once composed an elegy with a refrain which ended:

Gone, gone, gone—
Gone to his endeavor;
Gone, gone, gone,
Forever and forever.

In the *Enterprise* letter following its publication Mark Twain referred to this poem. He parodied the refrain and added, "If there is any criticism to make on it I should say there is a little too much 'gone' and not enough 'forever.'"

It was a more or less pointless witticism, but it had a humorous quotable flavor, and it made Evans mad. In a squib in the *Alta* he retaliated:

Mark Twain has killed the Mexican oyster. We only regret that the act was not inspired by a worthier motive. Mark Twain's sole reason for attacking the Mexican oyster was because the restaurant that sold them refused him credit.

A deadly thrust like that could not be parried in print. To deny or recriminate would be to appear ridiculous. One could only sweat and breathe vengeance.

"Joe," he said to Goodman, who had come over for a visit, "my one object in life now is to make enough money to stand trial and then go and murder Evans."

He wrote verses himself sometimes, and lightened his *Enterprise* letters with jingles. One of these concerned Tom Maguire, the autocrat manager of San Francisco theaters. It details Maguire's assault on one of his actors.

Tom Maguire,
Roused to ire,
Lighted on McDougal;
Tore his coat,
Clutched his throat,
And split him in the bugle.

For shame! oh, fie!
Maguire, why
Will you thus skyugle?
Why curse and swear,
And rip and tear
The innocent McDougal?

Of bones bereft,
Almost, you've left
Vestvali, gentle Jew gal;
And now you've smashed
And almost hashed
The form of poor McDougal!

Goodman remembers that Clemens and Gillis were together again on California Street at this time, and of hearing them sing, "The Doleful Ballad of the Rejected Lover," another of Mark Twain's compositions. It was a wild, blasphemous outburst, and the furious fervor with which Mark and Steve delivered it, standing side by side and waving their fists, did not render it less objectionable. Such memories as these are set down here, for they exhibit a phase of that robust personality, built of the same primeval material from which the world was created—built of every variety of material, in fact, ever incorporated in a human being—equally capable of writing unprintable coarseness and that rarest and most tender of all characterizations, the *Recollections of* JOAN OF ARC.

LI

THE CORNER-STONE

ALONG with his *Enterprise* work, Clemens continued to write occasionally for the *Californian*, but for some reason he did not offer the story of the jumping frog. For one thing, he did not regard it highly as literary material. He knew that he had enjoyed it himself, but the humor and fashion of its telling seemed to him of too simple and mild a variety in that day of boisterous incident and exaggerated form. By and by Artemus Ward turned up in San Francisco, and one night Mark Twain told him his experiences with Jim Gillis, and in Angel's Camp; also of Ben Coon and his tale of the Calaveras frog. Ward was delighted.

"Write it," he said. "There is still time to get it into my volume of sketches. Send it to Carleton, my publisher in New York."[1]

Clemens promised to do this, but delayed fulfilment somewhat, and by the time the sketch reached Carleton, Ward's book was about ready for the press. It did not seem worth while to Carleton to make any change of plans that would include the frog story. The publisher handed it over to Henry Clapp, editor of the *Saturday Press*, a perishing sheet, saying:

"Here, Clapp, here's something you can use in your

[1] This is in accordance with Mr. Clemens's recollection of the matter. The author can find no positive evidence that Ward was on the Pacific coast again in 1865. It seems likely, therefore, that the telling of the frog story and his approval of it were accomplished by exchange of letters.

paper." Clapp took it thankfully enough, we may believe.

"Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" [1] appeared in the *Saturday Press* of November 18, 1865, and was immediately copied and quoted far and near. It brought the name of Mark Twain across the mountains, bore it up and down the Atlantic coast, and out over the prairies of the Middle West. Away from the Pacific slope only a reader here and there had known the name before. Now every one who took a newspaper was treated to the tale of the wonderful Calaveras frog, and received a mental impress of the author's signature. The name Mark Twain became hardly an institution, as yet, but it made a strong bid for national acceptance.

As for its owner, he had no suspicion of these momentous happenings for a considerable time. The telegraph did not carry such news in those days, and it took a good while for the echo of his victory to travel to the Coast. When at last a lagging word of it did arrive, it would seem to have brought disappointment, rather than exaltation, to the author. Even Artemus Ward's opinion of the story had not increased Mark Twain's regard for it as literature. That it had struck the popular note meant, as he believed, failure for his more highly regarded work. In a letter written January 20 (1866), he says these things for himself:

> I do not know what to write; my life is so uneventful. I wish I was back there piloting up and down the river again. Verily, all is vanity and little worth—save piloting.
>
> To think that, after writing many an article a man might be excused for thinking tolerably good, those New York people should single out a villainous backwoods sketch to compliment me on!—"Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog"—a squib which would never have been written but to please Artemus Ward,

[1] This was the original title.

and then it reached New York too late to appear in his book.

But no matter. His book was a wretchedly poor one, generally speaking, and it could be no credit to either of us to appear between its covers.

This paragraph is from the New York correspondence of the San Francisco *Alta:*

"Mark Twain's story in the *Saturday Press* of November 18th, called "Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog," has set all New York in a roar, and he may be said to have made his mark. I have been asked fifty times about it and its author, and the papers are copying it far and near. It is voted the best thing of the day. Cannot the *Californian* afford to keep Mark all to itself? It should not let him scintillate so widely without first being filtered through the California press."

The New York publishing house of Carleton & Co. gave the sketch to the *Saturday Press* when they found it was too late for the book.

It is difficult to judge the Jumping Frog story to-day. It has the intrinsic fundamental value of one of Æsop's Fables.[1] It contains a basic idea which is essentially ludicrous, and the quaint simplicity of its telling is convincing and full of charm. It appeared in print at a time when American humor was chaotic, the public taste unformed. We had a vast appreciation for what was comic, with no great number of opportunities for showing it. We were so ready to laugh that when a real opportunity came along we improved it and kept on laughing and re-

[1] The resemblance of the frog story to the early Greek tales must have been noted by Prof. Henry Sidgwick, who synopsized it in Greek form and phrase for his book, *Greek Prose Composition.* Through this originated the impression that the story was of Athenian root. Mark Twain himself was deceived, until in 1899, when he met Professor Sidgwick, who explained that the *Greek* version was the translation and Mark Twain's the original; that he had thought it unnecessary to give credit for a story so well known. See *The Jumping Frog,* Harper & Bros., 1903, p. 64.

peating the cause of our merriment, directing the attention of our friends to it. Whether the story of "Jim Smiley's Frog," offered for the first time to-day, would capture the public, and become the initial block of a towering fame, is another matter. That the author himself *underrated* it is certain. That the public, receiving it at what we now term the psychological moment, may have *overrated* it is by no means impossible. In any case, it does not matter now. The stone rejected by the builder was made the corner-stone of his literary edifice. As such it is immortal.

In the letter already quoted, Clemens speaks of both Bret Harte and himself as having quit the *Californian*—in future expecting to write for Eastern papers. He adds:

> Though I am generally placed at the head of my breed of scribblers in this part of the country, the place properly belongs to Bret Harte, I think, though he denies it, along with the rest. He wants me to club a lot of old sketches together with a lot of his, and publish a book. I wouldn't do it, only he agrees to take all the trouble. But I want to know whether we are going to make anything out of it, first. However, he has written to a New York publisher, and if we are offered a bargain that will pay for a month's labor we will go to work and prepare the volume for the press.

Nothing came of the proposed volume, or of other joint literary schemes these two had then in mind. Neither of them would seem to have been optimistic as to their future place in American literature; certainly in their most exalted moments they could hardly have dreamed that within half a dozen years they would be the head and front of a new school of letters—the two most talked-of men in America.

LII

A COMMISSION TO THE SANDWICH ISLANDS

WHATEVER his first emotions concerning the success of "Jim Smiley's Frog" may have been, the sudden astonishing leap of that batrachian into American literature gave the author an added prestige at home as well as in distant parts. Those about him were inclined to regard him, in some degree at least, as a national literary figure, and to pay tribute accordingly. Special honors began to be shown to him. A fine new steamer, the *Ajax*, built for the Sandwich Island trade, carried on its initial trip a select party of guests of which he was invited to make one. He did not go, and reproached himself sorrowfully afterward.

If the *Ajax* were back I would go quick, and throw up my correspondence. She had fifty-two invited guests aboard—the cream of the town—gentlemen and ladies, and a splendid brass band. I could not accept because there would be no one to write my correspondence while I was gone.

In fact, the daily letter had grown monotonous. He was restless, and the *Ajax* excursion, which he had been obliged to forego, made him still more dissatisfied. An idea occurred to him: the sugar industry of the islands was a matter of great commercial interest to California, while the life and scenery there, picturesquely treated, would appeal to the general reader. He was on excellent terms with James Anthony and Paul Morrill, of the Sacramento *Union;* he proposed to them that they send

him as their special correspondent to report to their readers, in a series of letters, life, trade, agriculture, and general aspect of the islands. To his vast delight, they gave him the commission. He wrote home joyously now:

> I am to remain there a month and ransack the islands, the cataracts and volcanoes completely, and write twenty or thirty letters, for which they pay as much money as I would get if I stayed at home.

He adds that on his return he expects to start straight across the continent by way of the Columbia River, the Pend Oreille Lakes, through Montana and down the Missouri River. "Only two hundred miles of land travel from San Francisco to New Orleans."

So it is: man proposes, while fate, undisturbed, spins serenely on.

He sailed by the *Ajax* on her next trip, March 7 (1866), beginning his first sea voyage—a brand-new experience, during which he acquired the names of the sails and parts of the ship, with considerable knowledge of navigation, and of the islands he was to visit—whatever information passengers and sailors could furnish. It was a happy, stormy voyage altogether. In *Roughing It* he has given us some account of it.

It was the 18th of March when he arrived at Honolulu, and his first impression of that tranquil harbor remained with him always. In fact, his whole visit there became one of those memory-pictures, full of golden sunlight and peace, to be found somewhere in every human past.

The letters of introduction he had brought, and the reputation which had preceded him, guaranteed him welcome and hospitality. Officials and private citizens were alike ready to show him their pleasant land, and he fairly reveled in its delicious air, its summer warmth, its soft repose.

Oh, islands there are on the face of the deep
Where the leaves never fade and the skies never weep,

he quotes in his note-book, and adds:

Went with Mr. Damon to his cool, vine-shaded *home;* no care-worn or eager, anxious faces in this land of happy contentment. God, what a contrast with California and the Washoe!

And in another place:

They *live* in the S. I.—no rush, no worry—merchant goes down to his store like a gentleman at nine—goes home at four and *thinks no more* of business till next day. D—n San F. style of wearing out life.

He fitted in with the languorous island existence, but he had come for business, and he lost not much time. He found there a number of friends from Washoe, including the Rev. Mr. Rising, whose health had failed from overwork. By their direction, and under official guidance, he set out on Oahu, one of the several curious horses he has immortalized in print, and, accompanied by a pleasant party of ladies and gentlemen, encircled the island of that name, crossed it and recrossed it, visited its various battle-fields, returning to Honolulu, lame, sore, sunburnt, but triumphant. His letters home, better even than his *Union* correspondence, reveal his personal interest and enthusiasms.

I have got a lot of human bones which I took from one of these battle-fields. I guess I will bring you some of them. I went with the American Minister and took dinner this evening with the King's Grand Chamberlain, who is related to the royal family, and though darker than a mulatto he has an excellent English education, and in manners is an accomplished gentleman. He is to call for me in the morning; we will visit the King in the palace. After dinner they called in the "singing girls," and we had some beautiful music, sung in the native tongue.

It was his first association with royalty, and it was human that he should air it a little. In the same letter he states: "I will sail in a day or two on a tour of the other islands, to be gone two months."

In *Roughing It* he has given us a picture of his visits to the islands, their plantations, their volcanoes, their natural and historic wonders. He was an insatiable sight-seer then, and a persevering one. The very name of a new point of interest filled him with an eager enthusiasm to be off. No discomfort or risk or distance discouraged him. With a single daring companion—a man who said he could find the way—he crossed the burning floor of the mighty crater of Kilauea (then in almost constant eruption), racing across the burning lava floor, jumping wide and bottomless crevices, when a misstep would have meant death.

> By and by Marlette shouted "Stop!" I never stopped quicker in my life. I asked what the matter was. He said we were out of the path. He said we must not try to go on until we found it again, for we were surrounded with beds of rotten lava, through which we could easily break and plunge down 1,000 feet. I thought 800 would answer for me, and was about to say so, when Marlette partly proved his statement, crushing through and disappearing to his arm-pits.

They made their way across at last, and stood the rest of the night gazing down upon a spectacle of a crater in quivering action, a veritable lake of fire. They had risked their lives for that scene, but it seemed worth while.

His open-air life on the river and in the mining camps had prepared Samuel Clemens for adventurous hardships. He was thirty years old, with his full account of mental and physical capital. His growth had been slow, but he was entering now upon his golden age; he was fitted for conquest of whatever sort, and he was beginning to realize his power.

LIII

ANSON BURLINGAME AND THE "HORNET" DISASTER

IT was near the end of June when he returned to Honolulu from a tour of all the islands, fairly worn out and prostrated with saddle boils. He expected only to rest and be quiet for a season, but all unknown to him startling and historic things were taking place in which he was to have a part—events that would mark another forward stride in his career.

The *Ajax* had just come in, bringing his Excellency Anson Burlingame, then returning to his post as minister to China; also General Van Valkenburg, minister to Japan; Colonel Rumsey and Minister Burlingame's son, Edward,[1] then a lively boy of eighteen. Young Burlingame had read "The Jumping Frog," and was enthusiastic about Mark Twain and his work. Learning that he was in Honolulu, laid up at his hotel, the party sent word that they would call on him next morning.

Clemens felt that he must not accept this honor, sick or well. He crawled out of bed, dressed and shaved himself as quickly as possible, and drove to the American minister's, where the party was staying. They had a hilariously good time. When he returned to his hotel he sent them, by request, whatever he had on hand of his work. General Van Valkenburg had said to him:

"California is proud of Mark Twain, and some day the American people will be, too, no doubt."

[1] Edward L. Burlingame, now for many years editor of *Scribner's Magazine.*

There has seldom been a more accurate prophecy.

But a still greater event was imminent. On that very day (June 21, 1866) there came word of the arrival at Sanpahoe, on the island of Hawaii, of an open boat containing fifteen starving wretches, who on short, ten-day rations had been buffeting a stormy sea for forty-three days! A vessel, the *Hornet*, from New York, had taken fire and burned "on the line," and since early in May, on that meager sustenance, they had been battling with hundreds of leagues of adverse billows, seeking for land.

A few days following the first report, eleven of the rescued men were brought to Honolulu and placed in the hospital. Mark Twain recognized the great news importance of the event. It would be a splendid beat if he could interview the castaways and be the first to get their story to his paper. There was no cable in those days; a vessel for San Francisco would sail next morning. It was the opportunity of a lifetime, and he must not miss it. Bedridden as he was, the undertaking seemed beyond his strength.

But just at this time the Burlingame party descended on him, and almost before he knew it he was on the way to the hospital on a cot, escorted by the heads of the joint legations of China and Japan. Once there, Anson Burlingame, with his splendid human sympathy and handsome, courtly presence, drew from those enfeebled castaways all the story of their long privation and struggle, that had stretched across forty-three distempered days and four thousand miles of sea. All that Mark Twain had to do was to listen and make the notes.

He put in the night writing against time. Next morning, just as the vessel for the States was drifting away from her dock, a strong hand flung his bulky envelope of manuscript aboard, and if the vessel arrived his great beat was sure. It did arrive, and the three-column story on the front page of the Sacramento *Union*, in its

issue of July 19th, gave the public the first detailed history of the terrible *Hornet* disaster and the rescue of those starving men. Such a story occupied a wider place in the public interest than it would in these crowded days. The telegraph carried it everywhere, and it was featured as a sensation.

Mark Twain always adored the name and memory of Anson Burlingame. In his letter home he tells of Burlingame's magnanimity in "throwing away an invitation to dine with princes and foreign dignitaries" to help him. "You know I appreciate that kind of thing," he says; which was a true statement, and in future years he never missed an opportunity of paying an instalment on his debt of gratitude. It was proper that he should do so, for the obligation was a far greater one than that contracted in obtaining the tale of the *Hornet* disaster. It was the debt which one owes to a man who, from the deep measure of his understanding, gives encouragement and exactly needed and convincing advice. Anson Burlingame said to Samuel Clemens:

"You have great ability; I believe you have genius. What you need now is the refinement of association. Seek companionship among men of superior intellect and character. Refine yourself and your work. Never affiliate with inferiors; always climb."

Clemens never forgot that advice. He did not always observe it, but he rarely failed to realize its gospel. Burlingame urged him to travel.

"Come to Pekin next winter," he said, "and visit me. Make my house your home. I will give you letters and introduce you. You will have facilities for acquiring information about China."

It is not surprising then that Mark Twain never felt his debt to Anson Burlingame entirely paid. Burlingame came more than once to the hotel, for Clemens was really ill now, and they discussed plans for his future betterment.

He promised, of course, to visit China, and when he was alone put in a good deal of time planning a trip around the world which would include the great capitals. When not otherwise employed he read; though there was only one book in the hotel, a "blue and gold" edition of Dr. Holmes's *Songs in Many Keys*, and this he soon knew almost by heart, from title-page to *finis*.

He was soon up and about. No one could remain ill long in those happy islands. Young Burlingame came, and suggested walks. Once, when Clemens hesitated, the young man said:

"But there is a Scriptural command for you to go."

"If you can quote one I'll obey it," said Clemens.

"Very well. The Bible says, 'If any man require thee to walk a mile, go with him, Twain.'"

The command was regarded as sufficient. Clemens quoted the witticism later (in his first lecture), and it was often repeated in after-years, ascribed to Warner, Ward, and a dozen others. Its origin was as here set down.

Under date of July 4 (1866), Mark Twain's Sandwich Island note-book says:

> Went to a ball 8.30 P.M.—danced till 12.30; stopped at General Van Valkenburg's room and talked with him and Mr. Burlingame and Ed Burlingame until 3 A.M.

From which we may conclude that he had altogether recovered. A few days later the legation party had sailed for China and Japan, and on the 19th Clemens himself set out by a slow sailing-vessel to San Francisco. They were becalmed and were twenty-five days making the voyage. Captain Mitchell and others of the wrecked *Hornet* were aboard, and he put in a good deal of time copying their diaries and preparing a magazine article which, he believed, would prove his real entrance to the literary world.

The vessel lay almost perfectly still, day after day, and became a regular playground at sea. Sundays they had services and Mark Twain led the choir.

"I hope they will have a better opinion of our music in heaven than I have down here," he says in his notes. "If they don't, a thunderbolt will knock this vessel endways." It is perhaps worthy of mention that on the night of the 27th of July he records having seen another "splendidly colored lunar rainbow." That he regarded this as an indication of future good-fortune is not surprising, considering the events of the previous year.

It was August 13th when he reached San Francisco, and the note-book entry of that day says:

> Home again. No—not home again—in prison again, and all the wild sense of freedom gone. The city seems so cramped and so dreary with toil and care and business anxiety. God help me, I wish I were at sea again!

There were compensations, however. He went over to Sacramento, and was abundantly welcomed. It was agreed that, in addition to the twenty dollars allowed for each letter, a special bill should be made for the *Hornet* report.

"How much do you think it ought to be, Mark?" James Anthony asked.

"Oh, I'm a modest man; I don't want the whole *Union* office. Call it $100 a column."

There was a general laugh. The bill was made out at that figure, and he took it to the business office for payment.

"The cashier didn't faint," he wrote, many years later, "but he came rather near it. He sent for the proprietors, and they only laughed in their jolly fashion, and said it was a robbery, but 'no matter, pay it. It's all right.' The best men that ever owned a newspaper."[1]

[1] "My Début as a Literary Person."—Collected works.

Though inferior to the descriptive writing which a year later would give him a world-wide fame, the Sandwich Island letters added greatly to his prestige on the Pacific coast. They were convincing, informing, tersely—even eloquently—descriptive, with a vein of humor adapted to their audience. Yet to read them now, in the fine nonpareil type in which they were set, is such a wearying task that one can only marvel at their popularity. They were not brilliant literature, by our standards to-day. Their humor is usually of a muscular kind, varied with grotesque exaggerations; the literary quality is pretty attenuated. Here and there are attempts at verse. He had a fashion in those days of combining two or more poems with distracting, sometimes amusing, effect. Examples of these dislocations occur in the *Union* letters; a single stanza will present the general idea:

> The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
> The turf with their bayonets turning,
> And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold,
> And our lanterns dimly burning.

Only a trifling portion of the letters found their way into his Sandwich Island chapters of *Roughing It*, five years later. They do, however, reveal a sort of transition stage between the riotous florescence of the Comstock and the mellowness of his later style. He was learning to see things with better eyes, from a better point of view. It is not difficult to believe that this literary change of heart was in no small measure due to the influence of Anson Burlingame.

LIV

THE LECTURER

IT was not easy to take up the daily struggle again, but it was necessary.[1] Out of the ruck of possibilities (his brain always thronged with plans) he constructed three or four resolves. The chief of these was the trip around the world; but that lay months ahead, and in the mean time ways and means must be provided. Another intention was to finish the *Hornet* article, and forward it to *Harper's Magazine*—a purpose carried immediately into effect. To his delight the article found acceptance, and he looked forward to the day of its publication as the beginning of a real career. He intended to follow it up with a series on the islands, which in due time might result in a book and an income. He had gone so far as to experiment with a dedication for the book—an inscription to his mother, modified later for use in *The Innocents Abroad*. A third plan of action was to take advantage of the popularity of the Hawaiian letters, and deliver a lecture on the same subject. But this was a *fearsome* prospect—he trembled when he thought of it. As Governor of the Third House he had been extravagantly received and applauded, but in that case the position of public entertainer had been thrust upon him. To come forward now, *offering himself* in the same capacity, was a different matter. He believed he could entertain, but he

[1] Clemens once declared he had been so blue at this period that one morning he put a loaded pistol to his head, but found he lacked courage to pull the trigger.

lacked the courage to declare himself; besides, it meant a risk of his slender capital. He confided his situation to Col. John McComb, of the *Alta California*, and was startled by McComb's vigorous endorsement.

"Do it, by all means!" urged McComb. "It will be a grand success—I know it! Take the largest house in town, and charge a dollar a ticket."

Frightened but resolute, he went to the leading theater manager—the same Tom Maguire of his verses—and was offered the new opera-house at half rates. The next day this advertisement appeared:

MAGUIRE'S ACADEMY OF MUSIC
PINE STREET, NEAR MONTGOMERY

THE SANDWICH ISLANDS

MARK TWAIN
(HONOLULU CORRESPONDENT OF THE SACRAMENTO UNION)
WILL DELIVER A

LECTURE ON THE SANDWICH ISLANDS
AT THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC
ON TUESDAY EVENING, OCT. 2d
(1866)

In which passing mention will be made of Harris, Bishop Staley, the American missionaries, etc., and the absurd customs and characteristics of the natives duly discussed and described. The great volcano of Kilauea will also receive proper attention.

A SPLENDID ORCHESTRA
is in town, but *has not* been engaged

ALSO

A DEN OF FEROCIOUS WILD BEASTS
will be on exhibition in the next block

MAGNIFICENT FIREWORKS
were in contemplation for this occasion, but the idea has been abandoned

A GRAND TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION
may be expected; in fact, the public are privileged to expect whatever they please.

Dress Circle, $1.00 Family Circle, 50c

☞ Doors open at 7 o'clock The Trouble to begin at 8 o'clock

The story of that first lecture, as told in *Roughing It*, is a faithful one, and need only be summarized here. Expecting to find the house empty, he found it packed from the footlights to the walls. Sidling out from the wings—wobbly-kneed and dry of tongue—he was greeted by a murmur, a roar, a very crash of applause that frightened away his remaining vestiges of courage. Then came reaction—these were his friends, and he began to talk to them. Fear melted away, and as tide after tide of applause rose and billowed and came breaking at his feet, he knew something of the exaltation of Monte Cristo when he declared "The world is mine!"

It was a vast satisfaction to have succeeded. It was particularly gratifying at this time, for he dreaded going back into newspaper harness. Also, it softened later the disappointment resulting from another venture; for when the December Harper appeared, with his article, the printer and proof-reader had somehow converted Mark Twain into "Mark Swain," and his literary dream perished.

As to the literary value of his lecture, it was much higher than had been any portion of his letters, if we may judge from its few remaining fragments. One of these—a part of the description of the great volcano Haleakala, on the island of Maui—is a fair example of his eloquence.

It is somewhat more florid than his later description of the same scene in *Roughing It*, which it otherwise resembles; and we may imagine that its poetry, with the added charm of its delivery, held breathless his hearers, many of whom believed that no purer eloquence had ever been uttered or written.

It is worth remembering, too, that in this lecture, delivered so long ago, he advocated the idea of American ownership of these islands, dwelling at considerable length on his reasons for this idea.[1]

[1] For fragmentary extracts from this first lecture by Mark Twain and news comment, see Appendix D, end of last volume.

There was a gross return from his venture of more than $1,200, but with his usual business insight, which was never foresight, he had made an arrangement by which, after paying bills and dividing with his manager, he had only about one-third of this sum left. Still, even this was prosperity and triumph. He had acquired a new and lucrative profession at a bound. The papers lauded him as the "most piquant and humorous writer and lecturer on the Coast since the days of the lamented John Phœnix." He felt that he was on the highroad at last.

Denis McCarthy, late of the *Enterprise*, was in San Francisco, and was willing to become his manager. Denis was capable and honest, and Clemens was fond of him. They planned a tour of the near-by towns, beginning with Sacramento, extending it later even to the mining camps, such as Red Dog and Grass Valley; also across into Nevada, with engagements at Carson City, Virginia, and Gold Hill. It was an exultant and hilarious excursion—that first lecture tour made by Denis McCarthy and Mark Twain. Success traveled with them everywhere, whether the lecturer looked across the footlights of some pretentious "opera-house" or between the two tallow candles of some camp "academy." Whatever the building, it was packed, and the returns were maximum.

Those who remember him as a lecturer in that long-ago time say that his delivery was more quaint, his drawl more exaggerated, even than in later life; that his appearance and movements on the stage were natural, rather than graceful; that his manuscript, which he carried under his arm, looked like a ruffled hen. It was, in fact, originally written on sheets of manila paper, in large characters, so that it could be read easily by dim light, and it was doubtless often disordered.

There was plenty of amusing experience on this tour. At one place, when the lecture was over, an old man came to him and said:

"Be them your natural tones of eloquence?"

At Grass Valley there was a rival show, consisting of a lady tight-rope walker and her husband. It was a small place, and the tight-rope attraction seemed likely to fail. The lady's husband had formerly been a compositor on the *Enterprise*, so that he felt there was a bond of brotherhood between him and Mark Twain.

"Look here," he said. "Let's combine our shows. I'll let my wife do the tight-rope act outside and draw a crowd, and you go inside and lecture."

The arrangement was not made.

Following custom, the lecturer at first thought it necessary to be introduced, and at each place McCarthy had to skirmish around and find the proper person. At Red Dog, on the Stanislaus, the man selected failed to appear, and Denis had to provide another on short notice. He went down into the audience and captured an old fellow, who ducked and dodged but could not escape. Denis led him to the stage, a good deal frightened.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "this is the celebrated Mark Twain from the celebrated city of San Francisco, with his celebrated lecture about the celebrated Sandwich Islands."

That was as far as he could go; but it was far enough. Mark Twain never had a better introduction. The audience was in a shouting humor from the start.

Clemens himself used to tell of an introduction at another camp, where his sponsor said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I know only two things about this man: the first is that he's never been in jail, and the second is I don't know why." But this is probably apocryphal; there is too much "Mark Twain" in it.

When he reached Virginia, Goodman said to him:

"Sam, you do not need anybody to introduce you. There's a piano on the stage in the theater. Have it brought out in sight, and when the curtain rises you be

seated at the piano, playing and singing that song of yours, 'I Had an Old Horse Whose Name Was Methusalem,' and don't seem to notice that the curtain is up at first; then be surprised when you suddenly find out that it is up, and begin talking, without any further preliminaries."

This proved good advice, and the lecture, thus opened, started off with general hilarity and applause.

LV

HIGHWAY ROBBERY

HIS Nevada lectures were bound to be immensely successful. The people regarded him as their property over there, and at Carson and Virginia the houses overflowed. At Virginia especially his friends urged and begged him to repeat the entertainment, but he resolutely declined.

"I have only one lecture yet," he said. "I cannot bring myself to give it twice in the same town."

But that irresponsible imp, Steve Gillis, who was again in Virginia, conceived a plan which would make it not only necessary for him to lecture again, but would supply him with a subject. Steve's plan was very simple: it was to relieve the lecturer of his funds by a friendly highway robbery, and let an account of the adventure furnish the new lecture.

In *Roughing It* Mark Twain has given a version of this mock robbery which is correct enough as far as it goes; but important details are lacking. Only a few years ago (it was April, 1907), in his cabin on Jackass Hill, with Joseph Goodman and the writer of this history present, Steve Gillis made his "death-bed" confession as is here set down:

"Mark's lecture was given in Piper's Opera House, October 30, 1866. The Virginia City people had heard many famous lectures before, but they were mere sideshows compared with Mark's. It could have been run to crowded houses for a week. We begged him to give

the common people a chance; but he refused to repeat himself. He was going down to Carson, and was coming back to talk in Gold Hill about a week later, and his agent, Denis McCarthy, and I laid a plan to have him robbed on the Divide between Gold Hill and Virginia, after the Gold Hill lecture was over and he and Denis would be coming home with the money. The Divide was a good lonely place, and was famous for its hold-ups. We got City Marshal George Birdsall into it with us, and took in Leslie Blackburn, Pat Holland, Jimmy Eddington, and one or two more of Sam's old friends. We all loved him, and would have fought for him in a moment. That's the kind of friends Mark had in Nevada. If he had any enemies I never heard of them.

"We didn't take in Dan de Quille, or Joe here, because Sam was Joe's guest, and we were afraid he would tell him. We didn't take in Dan because we wanted him to write it up as a genuine robbery and make a big sensation. That would pack the opera-house at two dollars a seat to hear Mark tell the story.

"Well, everything went off pretty well. About the time Mark was finishing his lecture in Gold Hill the robbers all went up on the Divide to wait, but Mark's audience gave him a kind of reception after his lecture, and we nearly froze to death up there before he came along. By and by I went back to see what was the matter. Sam and Denis were coming, and carrying a carpet-sack about half full of silver between them. I shadowed them and blew a policeman's whistle as a signal to the boys when the lecturers were within about a hundred yards of the place. I heard Sam say to Denis:

"'I'm glad they've got a policeman on the Divide. They never had one in my day.'

"Just about that time the boys, all with black masks on and silver dollars at the sides of their tongues to disguise their voices, stepped out and stuck six-shooters

at Sam and Denis and told them to put up their hands. The robbers called each other 'Beauregard' and 'Stonewall Jackson.' Of course Denis's hands went up, and Mark's, too, though Mark wasn't a bit scared or excited. He talked to the robbers in his regular fashion. He said:

"'Don't flourish those pistols so promiscuously. They might go off by accident.'

"They told him to hand over his watch and money; but when he started to take his hands down they made him put them up again. Then he asked how they expected him to give them his valuables with his hands up in the sky. He said his treasures didn't lie in heaven. He told them not to take his watch, which was the one Sandy Baldwin and Theodore Winters had given him as Governor of the Third House, but we took it all the same.

"Whenever he started to put his hands down we made him put them up again. Once he said:

"'Don't you fellows be so rough. I was tenderly reared.'

"Then we told him and Denis to keep their hands up for fifteen minutes after we were gone—this was to give us time to get back to Virginia and be settled when they came along. As we were going away Mark called:

"'Say, you forgot something.'

"'What is it?'

"'Why, the carpet-bag.'

"He was cool all the time. Senator Bill Stewart, in his Autobiography, tells a great story of how scared Mark was, and how he ran; but Stewart was three thousand miles from Virginia by that time, and later got mad at Mark because he made a joke about him in *Roughing It.*

"Denis wanted to take his hands down pretty soon after we were gone, but Mark said:

"'No, Denis, I'm used to obeying orders when they are given in that convincing way; we'll just keep our

hands up another fifteen minutes or so for good measure.'

"We were waiting in a big saloon on C Street when Mark and Denis came along. We knew they would come in, and we expected Mark would be excited; but he was as unruffled as a mountain lake. He told us they had been robbed, and asked me if I had any money. I gave him a hundred dollars of his own money, and he ordered refreshments for everybody. Then we adjourned to the *Enterprise* office, where he offered a reward, and Dan de Quille wrote up the story and telegraphed it to the other newspapers. Then somebody suggested that Mark would have to give another lecture now, and that the robbery would make a great subject. He entered right into the thing, and next day we engaged Piper's Opera House, and people were offering five dollars apiece for front seats. It would have been the biggest thing that ever came to Virginia if it had come off.

"But we made a mistake, then, by taking Sandy Baldwin into the joke. We took in Joe here, too, and gave him the watch and money to keep, which made it hard for Joe afterward. But it was Sandy Baldwin that ruined us. He had Mark out to dinner the night before the show was to come off, and after he got well warmed up with champagne he thought it would be a smart thing to let Mark into what was really going on.

"Mark didn't see it our way. He was mad clear through."

At this point Joseph Goodman took up the story. He said:

"Those devils put Sam's money, watch, keys, pencils, and all his things into my hands. I felt particularly mean at being made accessory to the crime, especially as Sam was my guest, and I had grave doubts as to how he would take it when he found out the robbery was not genuine.

"I felt terribly guilty when he said:

"'Joe, those d—n thieves took my keys, and I can't get into my trunk. Do you suppose you could get me a key that would fit my trunk?'

"I said I thought I could during the day, and after Sam had gone I took his own key, put it in the fire and burnt it to make it look black. Then I took a file and scratched it here and there, to make it look as if I had been fitting it to the lock, feeling guilty all the time, like a man who is trying to hide a murder. Sam did not ask for his key that day, and that evening he was invited to Judge Baldwin's to dinner. I thought he looked pretty silent and solemn when he came home; but he only said:

"'Joe, let's play cards; I don't feel sleepy.'

"Steve here, and two or three of the other boys who had been active in the robbery, were present, and they did not like Sam's manner, so they excused themselves and left him alone with me. We played a good while; then he said:

"'Joe, these cards are greasy. I have got some new ones in my trunk. Did you get that key to-day?'

"I fished out that burnt, scratched-up key with fear and trembling. But he didn't seem to notice it at all, and presently returned with the cards. Then we played, and played, and played—till one o'clock—two o'clock—Sam hardly saying a word, and I wondering what was going to happen. By and by he laid down his cards and looked at me, and said:

"'Joe, Sandy Baldwin told me *all about* that robbery to-night. Now, Joe, I have found out that the law doesn't recognize a joke, and I am going to send every one of those fellows to the penitentiary.'

"He said it with such solemn gravity, and such vindictiveness, that I believed he was in dead earnest.

"I know that I put in two hours of the hardest work I ever did, trying to talk him out of that resolution. I

used all the arguments about the boys being his oldest friends; how they all loved him, and how the joke had been entirely for his own good; I pleaded with him, begged him to reconsider; I went and got his money and his watch and laid them on the table; but for a time it seemed hopeless. And I could imagine those fellows going behind the bars, and the sensation it would make in California; and just as I was about to give it up he said:

"'Well, Joe, I'll let it pass—this time; I'll forgive them again; I've had to do it *so many* times; but if *I should see* Denis McCarthy and Steve Gillis *mounting the scaffold to-morrow*, and I could save them by turning over my hand, I *wouldn't do it!*'

"He canceled the lecture engagement, however, next morning, and the day after left on the Pioneer Stage, by the way of Donner Lake, for California. The boys came rather sheepishly to see him off; but he would make no show of relenting. When they introduced themselves as Beauregard, Stonewall Jackson, etc., he merely said:

"'Yes, and you'll all be behind the bars some day. There's been a good deal of robbery around here lately, and it's pretty clear now who did it.' They handed him a package containing the masks which the robbers had worn. He received it in gloomy silence; but as the stage drove away he put his head out of the window, and after some pretty vigorous admonition resumed his old smile, and called out: 'Good-by, friends; good-by, thieves; I bear you no malice.' So the heaviest joke was on his tormentors after all."

This is the story of the famous Mark Twain robbery direct from headquarters. It has been garbled in so many ways that it seems worth setting down in full. Denis McCarthy, who joined him presently in San Francisco, received a little more punishment there.

"What kind of a trip did you boys have?" a friend asked of them.

Clemens, just recovering from a cold which the exposure on the Divide had given him, smiled grimly:

"Oh, pretty good, only Denis here mistook it for a spree."

He lectured again in San Francisco, this time telling the story of his Overland trip in 1861, and he did the daring thing of repeating three times the worn-out story of Horace Greeley's ride with Hank Monk, as given later in *Roughing It*. People were deadly tired of that story out there, and when he told it the first time, with great seriousness, they thought he must be failing mentally. They did not laugh—they only felt sorry. He waited a little, as if expecting a laugh, and presently led around to it and told it again. The audience was astonished still more, and pitied him thoroughly. He seemed to be waiting pathetically in the dead silence for their applause, then went on with his lecture; but presently, with labored effort, struggled around to the old story again, and told it for the third time. The audience suddenly saw the joke then, and became vociferous and hysterical in their applause; but it was a narrow escape. He would have been hysterical himself if the relief had not come when it did.

[1] A side-light on the Horace Greeley story and on Mr. Greeley's eccentricities is furnished by Mr. Goodman:

When I was going East in 1869 I happened to see Hank Monk just before I started. "Mr. Goodman," he said, "you tell Horace Greeley that I want to come East, and ask him to send me a pass." "All right, Hank," I said, "I will." It happened that when I got to New York City one of the first men I met was Greeley. "Mr. Greeley," said I, "I have a message for you from Hank Monk." Greeley bristled and glared at me. "That —— rascal?" he said. "He has done me more injury than any other man in America."

LVI

BACK TO THE STATES

IN the mean time Clemens had completed his plan for sailing, and had arranged with General McComb, of the *Alta California*, for letters during his proposed trip around the world. However, he meant to visit his people first, and his old home. He could go back with means now, and with the prestige of success.

"I sail to-morrow per Opposition—telegraphed you to-day," he wrote on December 14th, and a day later his note-book entry says:

> Sailed from San Francisco in Opposition (line) steamer *America*, Capt. Wakeman, at noon, 15th Dec., 1866. Pleasant sunny day, hills brightly clad with green grass and shrubbery.

So he was really going home at last! He had been gone five and a half years—eventful, adventurous years that had made him over completely, at least so far as ambitions and equipment were concerned. He had come away, in his early manhood, a printer and a pilot, unknown outside of his class. He was returning a man of thirty-one, with a fund of hard experience, three added professions—mining, journalism, and lecturing—also with a new name, already famous on the sunset slopes of its adoption, and beginning to be heard over the hills and far away. In some degree, at least, he resembled the prince of a fairy tale who, starting out humble and unnoticed, wins his way through a hundred adventures and returns with gifts and honors.

The homeward voyage was a notable one. It began with a tempest a little way out of San Francisco—a storm terrible but brief, that brought the passengers from their berths to the deck, and for a time set them praying. Then there was Captain Ned Wakeman, a big, burly, fearless sailor, who had visited the edges of all continents and archipelagos; who had been born at sea, and never had a day's schooling in his life, but knew the Bible by heart; who was full of human nature and profanity, and believed he was the only man on the globe who knew the secret of the Bible miracles. He became a distinct personality in Mark Twain's work—the memory of him was an unfailing delight. Captain "Ned Blakely," in *Roughing It*, who with his own hands hanged Bill Noakes, after reading him promiscuous chapters from the Bible, was Captain Wakeman. Captain "Stormfield," who had the marvelous visit to heaven, was likewise Captain Wakeman; and he appears in the "Idle Excursion" and elsewhere.

Another event of the voyage was crossing the Nicaragua Isthmus—the trip across the lake and down the San Juan River—a brand-new experience, between shores of splendid tropic tangle, gleaming with vivid life. The luxuriance got into his note-book.

> Dark grottos, fairy festoons, tunnels, temples, columns, pillars, towers, pilasters, terraces, pyramids, mounds, domes, walls, in endless confusion of vine-work—no shape known to architecture unimitated—and all so webbed together that short distances within are only gained by glimpses. Monkeys here and there; birds warbling; gorgeous plumaged birds on the wing; Paradise itself, the imperial realm of beauty—nothing to wish for to make it perfect.

But it was beyond the isthmus that the voyage loomed into proportions somber and terrible. The vessel they took there, the *San Francisco*, sailed from Greytown

January 1, 1867, the beginning of a memorable year in Mark Twain's life. Next day two cases of Asiatic cholera were reported in the steerage. There had been a rumor of it in Nicaragua, but no one expected it on the ship.

The nature of the disease was not hinted until evening, when one of the men died. Soon after midnight, the other followed. A minister making the voyage home, Rev. J. G. Fackler, read the burial service. The gaiety of the passengers, who had become well acquainted during the Pacific voyage, was subdued. When the word "cholera" went among them, faces grew grave and frightened. On the morning of January 4th Reverend Fackler's services were again required. The dead man was put overboard within half an hour after he had ceased to breathe.

Gloom settled upon the ship. All steam was made to put into Key West. Then some of the machinery gave way and the ship lay rolling, helplessly becalmed in the fierce heat of the Gulf, while repairs were being made. The work was done at a disadvantage, and the parts did not hold. Time and again they were obliged to lie to, in the deadly tropic heat, listening to the hopeless hammering, wondering who would be the next to be sewed up hastily in a blanket and slipped over the ship's side. On the 5th seven new cases of illness were reported. One of the crew, a man called "Shape," was said to be dying. A few hours later he was dead. By this time the Reverend Fackler himself had been taken.

"So they are burying poor 'Shape' without benefit of clergy," says the note-book.

General consternation now began to prevail. Then it was learned that the ship's doctor had run out of medicines. The passengers became demoralized. They believed their vessel was to become a charnel ship. Strict sanitary orders were issued, and a hospital was improvised.

Verily the ship is becoming a floating hospital herself—not an hour passes but brings its fresh sensation, its new disaster, its melancholy tidings. When I think of poor "Shape" and the preacher, both so well when I saw them yesterday evening, I realize that I myself may be dead to-morrow.

Since the last two hours all laughter, all levity, has ceased on the ship—a settled gloom is upon the faces of the passengers.

By noon it was evident that the minister could not survive. He died at two o'clock next morning; the fifth victim in less than five days. The machinery continued to break and the vessel to drag. The ship's doctor confessed to Clemens that he was helpless. There were eight patients in the hospital.

But on January 6th they managed to make Key West, and for some reason were not quarantined. Twenty-one passengers immediately deserted the ship and were heard of no more.

"I am glad they are gone. D—n them," says the notebook. Apparently he had never considered leaving, and a number of others remained. The doctor restocked his medicine-locker, and the next day they put to sea again. Certainly they were a daring lot of voyagers. On the 8th another of the patients died. Then the cooler weather seemed to check the contagion, and it was not until the night of the 11th, when the New York harbor lights were in view, that the final death occurred. There were no new cases by this time, and the other patients were convalescent. A certificate was made out that the last man had died of "dropsy." There would seem to have been no serious difficulty in docking the vessel and landing the passengers. The matter would probably be handled differently to-day.

LVII

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW PLANS

IT had been more than thirteen years since his first arrival in New York. Then he had been a youth, green, untraveled, eager to get away from home. Now a veteran, he was as eager to return.

He stopped only long enough in New York to see Charles Henry Webb, late of California, who had put together a number of the Mark Twain sketches, including "The Jumping Frog," for book publication. Clemens himself decided to take the book to Carleton, thinking that, having missed the fame of the "Frog" once, he might welcome a chance to stand sponsor for it now. But Carleton was wary; the "Frog" had won favor, and even fame, in its fugitive, vagrant way, but a book was another matter. Books were undertaken very seriously and with plenty of consideration in those days. Twenty-one years later, in Switzerland, Carleton said to Mark Twain:

"My chief claim to immortality is the distinction of having declined your first book."

Clemens was ready enough to give up the book when Carleton declined it, but Webb said he would publish it himself, and he set about it forthwith. The author waited no longer now, but started for St. Louis, and was soon with his mother and sister, whom he had not seen since that eventful first year of the war. They thought he looked old, which was true enough, but they found him unchanged in his manner: buoyant, full of banter and gravely quaint remarks—he was always the same. Jane Clemens had grown older, too. She was nearly

sixty-four, but as keen and vigorous as ever—proud (even if somewhat critical) of this handsome, brilliant man of new name and fame who had been her mischievous, wayward boy. She petted him, joked with him, scolded him, and inquired searchingly into his morals and habits. In turn he petted, comforted, and teased her. She decided that he was the same Sam, and always would be—a true prophecy.

He went up to Hannibal to see old friends. Many were married; some had moved away; some were dead—the old story. He delivered his lecture there, and was the center of interest and admiration—his welcome might have satisfied even Tom Sawyer. From Hannibal he journeyed to Keokuk, where he lectured again to a crowd of old friends and new, then returned to St. Louis for a more extended visit.

It was while he was in St. Louis that he first saw the announcement of the *Quaker City* Holy Land Excursion, and was promptly fascinated by what was then a brand-new idea in ocean travel—a splendid picnic—a choice and refined party that would sail away for a long summer's journeying to the most romantic of all lands and seas, the shores of the Mediterranean. No such argosy had ever set out before in pursuit of the golden fleece of happiness.

His projected trip around the world lost its charm in the light of this idyllic dream. Henry Ward Beecher was advertised as one of the party; General Sherman as another; also ministers, high-class journalists—the best minds of the nation. Anson Burlingame had told him to associate with persons of refinement and intellect. He lost no time in writing to the *Alta*, proposing that they send him in this select company.

Noah Brooks, who was then on the *Alta*, states [1] that

[1] In an article published in the *Century Magazine*.

the management was staggered by the proposition, but that Col. John McComb insisted that the investment in Mark Twain would be sound. A letter was accordingly sent, stating that a check for his passage would be forwarded in due season, and that meantime he could contribute letters from New York City. The rate for all letters was to be twenty dollars each. The arrangement was a godsend, in the fullest sense of the word, to Mark Twain.

It was now April, and he was eager to get back to New York to arrange his passage. The *Quaker City* would not sail for two months yet (two eventful months), but the advertisement said that passages must be secured by the 15th, and he was there on that day. Almost the first man he met was the chief of the New York *Alta* bureau with a check for twelve hundred and fifty dollars (the amount of his ticket) and a telegram saying, "Ship Mark Twain in the Holy Land Excursion and pay his passage." [1]

The *Alta*, it appears, had already applied for his berth; but, not having been vouched for by Mr. Beecher or some other eminent divine, Clemens was fearful he might not be accepted. Quite casually he was enlightened on this point. While waiting for attention in the shipping-office, with the *Alta* agent, he heard a newspaper man inquire

[1] The following letter, which bears no date, was probably handed to him later in the New York *Alta* office as a sort of credential:

ALTA CALIFORNIA OFFICE, 42 JOHN STREET, NEW YORK.

Sam'l Clemens, Esq., New York.

DEAR SIR,—I have the honor to inform you that Fred'k. MacCrellish & Co., Proprietors of *Alta California*, San Francisco, Cal., desire to engage your services as Special Correspondent on the pleasure excursion now about to proceed from this City to the Holy Land. In obedience to their instructions I have secured a passage for you on the vessel about to convey the excursion party referred to, and made such arrangements as I hope will secure your comfort and convenience. Your only instructions are that you will continue to write at such times and from such places as you deem proper, and in the same style that heretofore secured you the favor of the readers of the *Alta California*. I have the honor to remain, with high respect and esteem,

Your ob'dt. Servant,

JOHN J. MURPHY.

what notables were going. A clerk, with evident pride, rattled off the names:

"Lieutenant-General Sherman, Henry Ward Beecher, and Mark Twain; also probably General Banks."

So he was billed as an attraction. It was his first surreptitious taste of fame on the Atlantic coast, and not without its delight. The story often told of his being introduced by Ned House, of the *Tribune*, as a minister, though often repeated by Mark Twain himself, was in the nature of a joke, and mainly apocryphal. Clemens was a good deal in House's company at the time, for he had made an arrangement to contribute occasional letters to the *Tribune*, and House no doubt introduced him jokingly as one of the Quaker City ministers.

LVIII

A NEW BOOK AND A LECTURE

WEBB, meantime, had pushed the *Frog* book along. The proofs had been read and the volume was about ready for issue. Clemens wrote to his mother April 15th:

> My book will probably be in the bookseller's hands in about two weeks. After that I shall lecture. Since I have been gone, the boys have gotten up a " call " on me signed by two hundred Californians.

The lecture plan was the idea of Frank Fuller, who as acting Governor of Utah had known Mark Twain on the Comstock, and prophesied favorably of his future career. Clemens had hunted up Fuller on landing in New York in January, and Fuller had encouraged the lecture then; but Clemens was doubtful.

"I have no reputation with the general public here," he said. "We couldn't get a baker's dozen to hear me."

But Fuller was a sanguine person, with an energy and enthusiasm that were infectious. He insisted that the idea was sound. It would solidify Mark Twain's reputation on the Atlantic coast, he declared, insisting that the largest house in New York, Cooper Union, should be taken. Clemens had partially consented, and Fuller had arranged with all the Pacific slope people who had come East, headed by ex-Governor James W. Nye (by this time Senator at Washington), to sign a call for the "Inimitable Mark Twain" to appear before a New York audience. Fuller made Nye agree to be there and introduce the lecturer, and he was burningly busy and happy in the prospect.

But Mark Twain was not happy. He looked at that spacious hall and imagined the little crowd of faithful Californian stragglers that might gather in to hear him, and the ridicule of the papers next day. He begged Fuller to take a smaller hall, the smallest he could get. But only the biggest hall in New York would satisfy Fuller. He would have taken a larger one if he could have found it. The lecture was announced for May 6th. Its subject was "Kanakadom, or the Sandwich Islands" —tickets fifty cents. Fuller timed it to follow a few days after Webb's book should appear, so that one event might help the other.

Mark Twain's first book, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and Other Sketches*, was scheduled for May 1st, and did, in fact, appear on that date; but to the author it was no longer an important event. Jim Smiley's frog as standard-bearer of his literary procession was not an interesting object, so far as he was concerned—not with that vast, empty hall in the background and the insane undertaking of trying to fill it. The San Francisco venture had been as nothing compared with this. Fuller was working night and day with abounding joy, while the subject of his labor felt as if he were on the brink of a fearful precipice, preparing to try a pair of wings without first learning to fly. At one instant he was cold with fright, the next glowing with an infection of Fuller's faith. He devised a hundred schemes for the sale of seats. Once he came rushing to Fuller, saying:

"Send a lot of tickets down to the Chickering Piano Company. I have promised to put on my programme, 'The piano used at this entertainment is manufactured by Chickering.'"

"But you don't want a piano, Mark," said Fuller, "do you?"

"No, of course not; but they will distribute the tickets

for the sake of the advertisement, whether we have the piano or not."

Fuller got out a lot of handbills and hung bunches of them in the stages, omnibuses, and horse-cars. Clemens at first haunted these vehicles to see if anybody noticed the bills. The little dangling bunches seemed untouched. Finally two men came in; one of them pulled off a bill and glanced at it. His friend asked:

"Who's Mark Twain?"

"God knows; I don't!"

The lecturer could not ride any more. He was desperate.

"Fuller," he groaned, "there isn't a sign—a ripple of interest."

Fuller assured him that everything was working all right—"working underneath," Fuller said—but the lecturer was hopeless. He reported his impressions to the folks at home:

> Everything looks shady, at least, if not dark; I have a good agent; but now, after we have hired the Cooper Institute, and gone to an expense in one way or another of $500, it comes out that I have got to play against Speaker Colfax at Irving Hall, Ristori, and also the double troop of Japanese jugglers, the latter opening at the great Academy of Music—and with all this against me I have taken the largest house in New York and cannot back water.

He might have added that there were other rival entertainments: "The Flying Scud" was at Wallack's, the "Black Crook" was at Niblo's, John Brougham at the Olympic and there were at least a dozen lesser attractions. New York was not the inexhaustible city in those days; these things could gather in the public to the last man. When the day drew near, and only a few tickets had been sold, Clemens was desperate.

"Fuller," he said, "there'll be nobody in the Cooper

Union that night but you and me. I am on the verge of suicide. I would commit suicide if I had the pluck and the outfit. You must paper the house, Fuller. You must send out a flood of complimentaries."

"Very well," said Fuller; "what we want this time is reputation anyway—money is secondary. I'll put you before the choicest, most intelligent audience that ever was gathered in New York City. I will bring in the school-instructors—the finest body of men and women in the world."

Fuller immediately sent out a deluge of complimentary tickets, inviting the school-teachers of New York and Brooklyn, and all the adjacent country, to come free and hear Mark Twain's great lecture on Kanakadom. This was within forty-eight hours of the time he was to appear.

Senator Nye was to have joined Clemens and Fuller at the Westminster, where Clemens was stopping, and they waited for him there with a carriage, fuming and swearing, until it was evident that he was not coming. At last Clemens said:

"Fuller, you've got to introduce me."

"No," suggested Fuller; "I've got a better scheme than that. You get up and begin by bemeaning Nye for not being there. That will be better anyway."

Clemens said:

"Well, Fuller, I can do that. I feel that way. I'll try to think up something fresh and happy to say about that horse-thief."

They drove to Cooper Union with trepidation. Suppose, after all, the school-teachers had declined to come? They went half an hour before the lecture was to begin. Forty years later Mark Twain said:

"I couldn't keep away. I wanted to see that vast Mammoth cave and die. But when we got near the building I saw that all the streets were blocked with people, and that traffic had stopped. I couldn't believe

that these people were trying to get into Cooper Institute; but they were, and when I got to the stage at last the house was jammed full—packed; there wasn't room enough left for a child.

"I was happy and I was excited beyond expression. I poured the Sandwich Islands out on those people, and they laughed and shouted to my entire content. For an hour and fifteen minutes I was in paradise."

And Fuller to-day, alive and young, when so many others of that ancient time and event have vanished, has added:

"When Mark appeared the Californians gave a regular yell of welcome. When that was over he walked to the edge of the platform, looked carefully down in the pit, round the edges as if he were hunting for something. Then he said: 'There was to have been a piano here, and a senator to introduce me. I don't seem to discover them anywhere. The piano was a good one, but we will have to get along with such music as I can make with your help. As for the senator—' Then Mark let himself go and did as he promised about Senator Nye. He said things that made men from the Pacific coast, who had known Nye, scream with delight. After that came his lecture. The first sentence captured the audience. From that moment to the end it was either in a roar of laughter or half breathless by his beautiful descriptive passages. People were positively ill for days, laughing at that lecture."

So it was a success: everybody was glad to have been there; the papers were kind, congratulations numerous.[1]

[1] Kind, but not extravagant; those were burning political times, and the doings of mere literary people did not excite the press to the extent of headlines. A jam around Cooper Union to-day, followed by such an artistic triumph, would be a news event. On the other hand, Schuyler Colfax, then Speaker of the House, was reported to the extent of a column, nonpareil. His lecture was of no

COOPER INSTITUTE

The Sandwich Islands.

By Invitation of a large number of prominent Californians and Citizens of New York,

MARK TWAIN

WILL DELIVER A

Serio-Humorous Lecture

CONCERNING

KANAKADOM

OR,

THE SANDWICH ISLANDS,

AT

COOPER INSTITUTE,

On Monday Evening, May 6, 1867.

TICKETS FIFTY CENTS.

For Sale at CHICKERING & SONS, 652 Broadway, and at the Principal Hotels.

Doors open at 7 o'clock. The Wisdom will begin to flow at 8.

Mark Twain always felt grateful to the school-teachers for that night. Many years later, when they wanted him to read to them in Steinway Hall, he gladly gave his services without charge.

Nor was the lecture a complete financial failure. In spite of the flood of complimentaries, there was a cash return of some three hundred dollars from the sale of tickets—a substantial aid in defraying the expenses which Fuller assumed and insisted on making good on his own account. That was Fuller's regal way; his return lay in the joy of the game, and in the winning of the larger stake for a friend.

"Mark," he said, "it is all right. The fortune didn't come, but it will. The fame has arrived; with this lecture and your book just out you are going to be the most talked-of man in the country. Your letters for the *Alta* and the *Tribune* will get the widest reception of any letters of travel ever written."

literary importance, and no echo of it now remains. But those *were* political, *not* artistic, days.

Of Mark Twain's lecture the *Times* notice said:

"Nearly every one present came prepared for considerable provocation for enjoyable laughter, and from the appearance of their mirthful faces leaving the hall at the conclusion of the lecture but few were disappointed, and it is not too much to say that seldom has so large an audience been so uniformly pleased as the one that listened to Mark Twain's quaint remarks last evening. The large hall of the Union was filled to its utmost capacity by fully two thousand persons, which fact spoke well for the reputation of the lecturer and his future success. Mark Twain's style is a quaint one both in manner and method, and through his discourse he managed to keep on the right side of the audience, and frequently convulsed it with hearty laughter. . . . During a description of the topography of the Sandwich Islands the lecturer surprised his hearers by a graphic and eloquent description of the eruption of the great volcano, which occurred in 1840, and his language was loudly applauded.

"Judging from the success achieved by the lecturer last evening, he should repeat his experiment at an early date."

LIX

THE FIRST BOOK

WITH the shadow of the Cooper Institute so happily dispelled, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, and his following of *Other Sketches*, became a matter of more interest. The book was a neat blue-and-gold volume printed by John A. Gray & Green, the old firm for which the boy, Sam Clemens, had set type thirteen years before. The title-page bore Webb's name as publisher, with the American News Company as selling agents. It further stated that the book was edited by "John Paul," that is to say by Webb himself. The dedication was in keeping with the general irresponsible character of the venture. It was as follows:

TO
JOHN SMITH
WHOM I HAVE KNOWN IN DIVERS AND SUNDRY
PLACES ABOUT THE WORLD, AND WHOSE
MANY AND MANIFOLD VIRTUES DID
ALWAYS COMMAND MY ESTEEM,
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

It is said that the man to whom a volume is dedicated always buys a copy. If this prove true in the present instance, a princely affluence is about to burst upon

THE AUTHOR.

The "advertisement" stated that the author had "scaled the heights of popularity at a single jump, and won for himself the sobriquet of the "Wild Humorist

of the Pacific Slope"; furthermore, that he was known to fame as the "Moralist of the Main," and that as such he would be likely to go down to posterity, adding that it was in his secondary character, as humorist, rather than in his primal one of moralist, that the volume aimed to present him.[1]

Every little while, during the forty years or more that have elapsed since then, some one has come forward announcing Mark Twain to be as much a philosopher as a humorist, as if this were a new discovery. But it was a discovery chiefly to the person making the announcement. Every one who ever knew Mark Twain at any period of his life made the same discovery. Every one who ever took the trouble to familiarize himself with his work made it. Those who did not make it have known his work only by hearsay and quotation, or they have read it very casually, or have been very dull. It would be much more of a discovery to find a book in which he has not been serious—a philosopher, a moralist, and a poet. Even in the *Jumping Frog* sketches, selected particularly for their inconsequence, the under-vein of reflection and purpose is not lacking. The answer to Moral Statistician[2] is fairly alive with human wisdom and righteous wrath. The "Strange Dream," though ending in a joke, is aglow with poetry. Webb's "advertisement" was playfully written, but it was earnestly intended, and he writes Mark Twain down a moralist—not as a discovery, but as a matter of course. The discoveries came along later, when the author's fame as a humorist had dazzled the nations.

It is as well to say it here as anywhere, perhaps, that one reason why Mark Twain found it difficult to be accepted

[1] The advertisement complete, with extracts from the book, may be found under Appendix E, at the end of last volume.

[2] In "Answers to Correspondents," included now in *Sketches New and Old*. An extract from it, and from "A Strange Dream," will be found in Appendix E.

seriously was the fact that his personality was in itself so essentially humorous. His physiognomy, his manner of speech, his movement, his mental attitude toward events—all these were distinctly diverting. When we add to this that his medium of expression was nearly always full of the quaint phrasing and those surprising appositions which we recognize as amusing, it is not so astonishing that his deeper, wiser, more serious purpose should be overlooked. On the whole these unabated discoverers serve a purpose, if only to make the rest of their species look somewhat deeper than the comic phrase.

The little blue-and-gold volume which presented the *Frog* story and twenty-six other sketches in covers is chiefly important to-day as being Mark Twain's first book. The selections in it were made for a public that had been too busy with a great war to learn discrimination, and most of them have properly found oblivion. Fewer than a dozen of them were included in his collected *Sketches* issued eight years later, and some even of those might have been spared; also some that were added, for that matter; but detailed literary criticism is not the province of this work. The reader may investigate and judge for himself.

Clemens was pleased with the appearance of his book. To Bret Harte he wrote:

> The book is out and it is handsome. It is full of damnable errors of grammar and deadly inconsistencies of spelling in the Frog sketch, because I was away and did not read proofs; but be a friend and say nothing about these things. When my hurry is over, I will send you a copy to pisen the children with.

That he had no exaggerated opinion of the book's contents or prospects we may gather from his letter home:

> As for the Frog book, I don't believe it will ever pay anything worth a cent. I published it simply to advertise myself, and not with the hope of making anything out of it.

He had grown more lenient in his opinion of the merits of the *Frog* story itself since it had made friends in high places, especially since James Russell Lowell had pronounced it "the finest piece of humorous writing yet produced in America"; but compared with his lecture triumph, and his prospective journey to foreign seas, the book venture, at best, claimed no more than a casual regard. A Sandwich Island book (he had collected his *Union* letters with the idea of a volume) he gave up altogether after one unsuccessful offer of it to Dick & Fitzgerald.

Frank Fuller's statement, that the fame had arrived, had in it some measure of truth. Lecture propositions came from various directions. Thomas Nast, then in the early day of his great popularity, proposed a joint tour, in which Clemens would lecture, while he, Nast, illustrated the remarks with lightning caricatures. But the time was too short; the *Quaker City* would sail on the 8th of June, and in the mean time the *Alta* correspondent was far behind with his New York letters. On May 29th he wrote:

I am 18 *Alta* letters behind, and I *must* catch up or bust. I have refused all invitations to lecture. Don't know how my book is coming on.

He worked like a slave for a week or so, almost night and day, to clean up matters before his departure. Then came days of idleness and reaction—days of waiting, during which his natural restlessness and the old-time regret for things done and undone, beset him.

My passage is paid, and if the ship sails I sail on her; but I make no calculations, have bought no cigars, no sea-going clothing—have made no preparations whatever—shall not pack my trunk till the morning we sail. . . .

All I do know or feel is that I am wild with impatience to

move—move—*move!* Curse the endless delays! They always kill me—they make me neglect every duty, and then I have a conscience that tears me like a wild beast. I wish I never had to stop anywhere a month. I do more mean things the moment I get a chance to fold my hands and sit down than ever I get forgiveness for.

Yes, we are to meet at Mr. Beach's next Thursday night, and I suppose we shall have to be gotten up regardless of expense, in swallow-tails, white kids and everything *en règle*.

I am resigned to Rev. Mr. Hutchinson's or anybody else's supervision. I don't mind it. I am fixed. I have got a splendid, immoral, tobacco-smoking, wine-drinking, godless room-mate who is as good and true and right-minded a man as ever lived—a man whose blameless conduct and example will always be an eloquent sermon to all who shall come within their influence. But send on the professional preachers—there are none I like better to converse with; if they're not narrow-minded and bigoted they make good companions.

The "splendid immoral room-mate" was Dan Slote —"Dan," of *The Innocents*, a lovable character—all as set down. Samuel Clemens wrote one more letter to his mother and sister—a conscience-stricken, pessimistic letter of good-by written the night before sailing. Referring to the *Alta* letters he says:

I think they are the stupidest letters ever written from New York. Corresponding has been a perfect drag ever since I got to the States. If it continues abroad, I don't know what the *Tribune* and *Alta* folk will think.

He remembers Orion, who had been officially eliminated when Nevada had received statehood.

I often wonder if his law business is going satisfactorily. I wish I had gone to Washington in the winter instead of going West. I could have gouged an office out of Bill Stewart for him, and that would have atoned for the loss of my home visit. But I am so worthless that it seems to me I never do anything

or accomplish anything that lingers in my mind as a pleasant memory. My mind is stored full of unworthy conduct toward Orion and toward you all, and an accusing conscience gives me peace only in excitement and restless moving from place to place. If I could only say I had done one thing for any of you that entitled me to your good opinions (I say nothing of your love, for I am sure of *that*, no matter how unworthy of it I may make myself—from Orion down, you have always given me that, all the days of my life, when God Almighty knows I have seldom deserved it), I believe I could go home and stay there—and I *know* I would care little for the world's praise or blame. There is no satisfaction in the world's praise anyhow, and it has no worth to me save in the way of business. I tried to gather up its compliments to send you, but the work was distasteful and I dropped it.

You observe that under a cheerful exterior I have got a spirit that is angry with me and gives me freely its contempt. I can get away from that at sea, and be tranquil and satisfied; and so, with my parting love and benediction for Orion and all of you, I say good-by and God bless you all—and welcome the wind that wafts a weary soul to the sunny lands of the Mediterranean!

Yrs. forever,

SAM.

LX

THE INNOCENTS AT SEA

HOLY LAND PLEASURE EXCURSION

Steamer: *Quaker City.*
Captain C. C. Duncan.
Left New York at 2 P.M., June 8, 1867.
Rough weather—anchored within the harbor to lay all night.

THAT first note recorded an event momentous in Mark Twain's career—an event of supreme importance, if we concede that any link in a chain regardless of size is of more importance than any other link. Undoubtedly it remains the most conspicuous event, as the world views it now, in retrospect.

The note further heads a new chapter of history in sea-voyaging. No such thing as the sailing of an ocean steamship with a pleasure-party on a long transatlantic cruise had ever occurred before. A similar project had been undertaken the previous year, but owing to a cholera scare in the East it had been abandoned. Now the dream had become a fact—a stupendous fact when we consider it. Such an important beginning as that now would in all likelihood furnish the chief news story of the day.

But they had different ideas of news in those days. There were no headlines announcing the departure of the *Quaker City*—only the barest mention of the ship's sail-

ing, though a prominent position was given to an account of a senatorial excursion-party which set out that same morning over the Union Pacific Railway, then under construction. Every name in that political party was set down, and not one of them except General Hancock will ever be heard of again. The New York *Times*, however, had some one on its editorial staff who thought it worth while to comment a little on the history-making *Quaker City* excursion. The writer was pleasantly complimentary to officers and passengers. He referred to Moses S. Beach, of the *Sun*, who was taking with him type and press, whereby he would "skilfully utilize the brains of the company for their mutual edification." Mr. Beecher and General Sherman would find talent enough aboard to make the hours go pleasantly (evidently the writer had not interested himself sufficiently to know that these gentlemen were not along), and the paragraph closed by prophesying other such excursions, and wishing the travelers "good speed, a happy voyage, and a safe return."

That was handsome, especially for those days; only now, some fine day, when an airship shall start with a band of happy argonauts to lands beyond the sunrise for the first time in history, we shall feature it and emblazon it with pictures in the Sunday papers, and weeklies, and in the magazines.[1]

That Henry Ward Beecher and General Sherman had concluded not to go was a heavy disappointment at first; but it proved only a temporary disaster. The inevitable amalgamation of all ship companies took place. The sixty-seven travelers fell into congenial groups, or they mingled and devised amusements, and gossiped and be-

[1] The *Quaker City* idea was so unheard-of that in some of the foreign ports visited, the officials could not believe that the vessel was simply a pleasure-craft, and were suspicious of some dark, ulterior purpose.

came a big family, as happy and as free from contention as families of that size are likely to be.

The *Quaker City* was a good enough ship and sizable for her time. She was registered eighteen hundred tons —about one-tenth the size of Mediterranean excursion-steamers to-day—and when conditions were favorable she could make ten knots an hour under steam—or, at least, she could do it with the help of her auxiliary sails. Altogether she was a cozy, satisfactory ship, and they were a fortunate company who had her all to themselves and went out in her on that long-ago ocean gipsying. She has grown since then, even to the proportions of the *Mayflower*. It was necessary for her to grow to hold all of those who in later times claimed to have sailed in her on that voyage with Mark Twain.[1]

They were not all ministers and deacons aboard the *Quaker City*. Clemens found other congenial spirits besides his room-mate Dan Slote—among them the ship's surgeon, Dr. A. Reeves Jackson (the guide-destroying "Doctor" of *The Innocents*); Jack Van Nostrand, of New Jersey ("Jack"); Julius Moulton, of St. Louis ("Moult"), and other care-free fellows, the smoking-room crowd which is likely to make comradeship its chief watchword. There were companionable people in the cabin crowd also—fine, intelligent men and women, especially one of the latter, a middle-aged, intellectual, motherly soul—Mrs. A. W. Fairbanks, of Cleveland, Ohio. Mrs. Fairbanks—herself a newspaper correspondent for her husband's paper, the Cleveland *Herald*—had a large influence on the character and general tone of those *Quaker City* letters which established Mark Twain's larger fame. She was an able writer herself; her judgment was thoughtful, refined, unbiased—altogether of a superior sort. She understood

[1] The *Quaker City* passenger list will be found under Appendix F, at the end of last volume.

Samuel Clemens, counseled him, encouraged him to read his letters aloud to her, became in reality "Mother Fairbanks," as they termed her, to him and to others of that ship who needed her kindly offices.

In one of his home letters, later, he said of her:

> She was the most refined, intelligent, cultivated lady in the ship, and altogether the kindest and best. She sewed my buttons on, kept my clothing in presentable trim, fed me on Egyptian jam (when I behaved), lectured me awfully on the quarter-deck on moonlit promenading evenings, and cured me of several bad habits. I am under lasting obligations to her. She looks young because she is so good, but she has a grown son and daughter at home.

In one of the early letters which Mrs. Fairbanks wrote to her paper she is scarcely less complimentary to him, even if in a different way.

> We have D.D.'s and M.D.'s—we have men of wisdom and men of wit. There is one table from which is sure to come a peal of laughter, and all eyes are turned toward Mark Twain, whose face is perfectly mirth-provoking. Sitting lazily at the table, scarcely genteel in his appearance, there is something, I know not what, that interests and attracts. I saw to-day at dinner venerable divines and sage-looking men convulsed with laughter at his drolleries and quaint, odd manners.

It requires only a few days on shipboard for acquaintances to form, and presently a little afternoon group was gathering to hear Mark Twain read his letters. Mrs. Fairbanks was there, of course, also Mr. and Mrs. S. L. Severance, likewise of Cleveland, and Moses S. Beach, of the *Sun*, with his daughter Emma, a girl of seventeen. Dan Slote was likely to be there, too, and Jack, and the Doctor, and Charles J. Langdon, of Elmira, New York, a boy of eighteen, who had conceived a deep admiration

for the brilliant writer. They were fortunate ones who first gathered to hear those daring, wonderful letters.

But the benefit was a mutual one. He furnished a priceless entertainment, and he derived something equally priceless in return—the test of immediate audience and the boon of criticism. Mrs. Fairbanks especially was frankly sincere. Mr. Severance wrote afterward:

> One afternoon I saw him tearing up a bunch of the soft, white paper—copy paper, I guess the newspapers call it—on which he had written something, and throwing the fragments into the Mediterranean. I inquired of him why he cast away the fruits of his labors in that manner.
>
> "Well," he drawled, "Mrs. Fairbanks thinks it oughtn't to be printed, and, like as not, she is right."

And Emma Beach (Mrs. Abbott Thayer) remembers hearing him say:

"Well, Mrs. Fairbanks has just destroyed another four hours' work for me."

Sometimes he played chess with Emma Beach, who thought him a great hero because, once when a crowd of men were tormenting a young lad, a passenger, Mark Twain took the boy's part and made them desist.

"I am sure I was right, too," she declares; "heroism came natural to him."

Mr. Severance recalls another incident which, as he says, was trivial enough, but not easy to forget:

> We were having a little celebration over the birthday anniversary of Mrs. Duncan, wife of our captain. Mark Twain got up and made a little speech, in which he said Mrs. Duncan was really older than Methuselah because she knew a lot of things that Methuselah never heard of. Then he mentioned a number of more or less modern inventions, and wound up by saying, "What did Methuselah know about a barbed-wire fence?"

THE INNOCENTS AT SEA

Except *Following the Equator*, *The Innocents Abroad* comes nearer to being history than any other of Mark Twain's travel-books. The notes for it were made on the spot, and there was plenty of fact, plenty of fresh, new experience, plenty of incident to set down. His idea of descriptive travel in those days was to tell the story as it happened; also, perhaps, he had not then acquired the courage of his inventions. We may believe that the adventures with Jack, Dan, and the Doctor are elaborated here and there; but even those happened substantially as recorded. There is little to add, then, to the story of that halcyon trip, and not much to elucidate.

The old note-books give a light here and there that is interesting. It is curious to be looking through them now, trying to realize that these penciled memoranda were the fresh, first impressions that would presently grow into the world's most delightful book of travel; that they were set down in the very midst of that care-free little company that frolicked through Italy, climbed wearily the arid Syrian hills. They are all dead now; but to us they are as alive and young to-day as when they followed the footprints of the Son of Man through Palestine, and stood at last before the Sphinx, impressed and awed by its "five thousand slow-revolving years."

Some of the items consist of no more than a few terse, suggestive words—serious, humorous, sometimes profane. Others are statistical, descriptive, elaborated. Also there are drawings—"not copied," he marks them, with a pride not always justified by the result. The earlier notes are mainly comments on the "pilgrims," the freak pilgrims: "the Frenchy-looking woman who owns a dog and keeps up an interminable biography of him to the passengers"; the "long-legged, simple, wide-mouthed, horse-laughing young fellow who once made a sea voyage to Fortress Monroe, and quotes eternally from his experiences"; also, there is reference to another young man, "good, ac-

commodating, pleasant but fearfully green." This young person would become the "Interrogation Point," in due time, and have his picture on page 71 (old edition), while opposite him, on page 70, would appear the "oracle," identified as one Doctor Andrews, who (the note-book says) had the habit of "smelling in guide-books for knowledge and then trying to play it for old information that has been festering in his brain." Sometimes there are abstract notes such as:

How lucky Adam was. He knew when he said a good thing that no one had ever said it before.

Of the "character" notes, the most important and elaborated is that which presents the "Poet Lariat." This is the entry, somewhat epitomized:

BLOODGOOD H. CUTTER

He is fifty years old, and small of his age. He dresses in homespun, and is a simple-minded, honest, old-fashioned farmer, with a strange proclivity for writing rhymes. He writes them on all possible subjects, and gets them printed on slips of paper, with his portrait at the head. These he will give to any man who comes along, whether he has anything against him or not. . . .

Dan said:

"It must be a great happiness to you to sit down at the close of day and put its events all down in rhymes and poetry, like Byron and Shakespeare and those fellows."

"Oh yes, it is—it is— Why, many's the time I've had to get up in the night when it comes on me:

Whether we're on the sea or the land
We've all got to go at the word of command—

Hey! how's that?"

A curious character was Cutter—a Long Island farmer with the obsession of rhyme. In his old age, in an interview, he said:

"Mark was generally writing and he was glum. He would write what we were doing, and I would write poetry, and Mark would say:

"'For Heaven's sake, Cutter, keep your poems to yourself.'

"Yes, Mark was pretty glum, and he was generally writing."

Poor old Poet Lariat—dead now with so many others of that happy crew. We may believe that Mark learned to be "glum" when he saw the Lariat approaching with his sheaf of rhymes. We may believe, too, that he was "generally writing." He contributed fifty-three letters to the *Alta* during that five months and six to the *Tribune*. They would average about two columns nonpareil each, which is to say four thousand words, or something like two hundred and fifty thousand words in all. To turn out an average of fifteen hundred words a day, with continuous sight-seeing besides, one must be *generally writing* during any odd intervals; those who are wont to regard Mark Twain as lazy may consider these statistics. That he detested manual labor is true enough, but at the work for which he was fitted and intended it may be set down here upon authority (and despite his own frequent assertions to the contrary) that to his last year he was the most industrious of men.

BLOODGOOD H. CUTTER (POET LARIAT)

LXI

THE INNOCENTS ABROAD

IT was Dan, Jack, and the Doctor who with Mark Twain wandered down through Italy and left moral footprints that remain to this day. The Italian guides are wary about showing pieces of the True Cross, fragments of the Crown of Thorns, and the bones of saints since then. They show them, it is true, but with a smile; the name of Mark Twain is a touch-stone to test their statements. Not a guide in Italy but has heard the tale of that iconoclastic crew, and of the book which turned their marvels into myths, their relics into bywords.

It was Doctor Jackson, Colonel Denny, Doctor Birch, and Samuel Clemens who evaded the quarantine and made the perilous night trip to Athens and looked upon the Parthenon and the sleeping city by moonlight. It is all set down in the notes, and the account varies little from that given in the book; only he does not tell us that Captain Duncan and the quartermaster, Pratt, connived at the escapade, or how the latter watched the shore in anxious suspense until he heard the whistle which was their signal to be taken aboard. It would have meant six months' imprisonment if they had been captured, for there was no discretion in the Greek law.

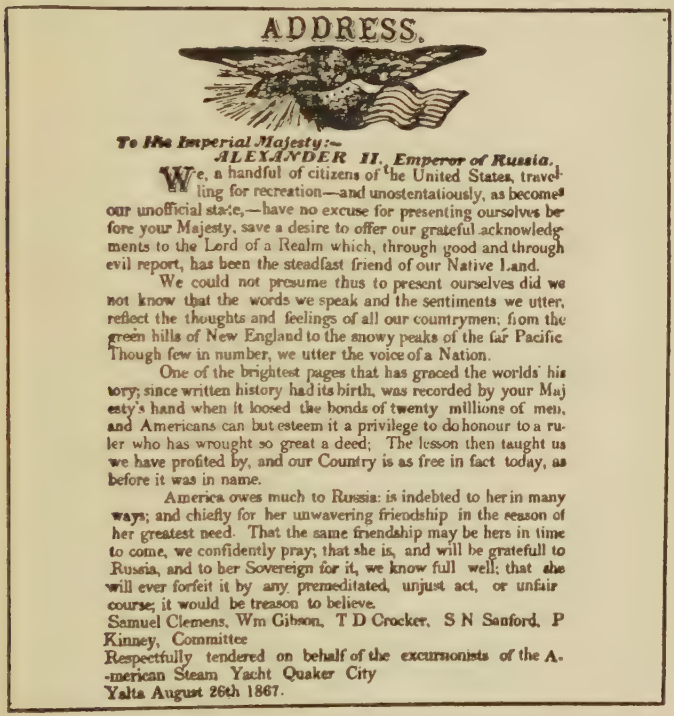
It was T. D. Crocker, A. N. Sanford, Col. Peter Kinney, and William Gibson who were delegated to draft the address to the Emperor of Russia at Yalta, with Samuel L. Clemens as chairman of that committee. The chair-

man wrote the address, the opening sentence of which he grew so weary of hearing:

We are a handful of private citizens of America, traveling simply for recreation, and unostentatiously, as becomes our unofficial state, [From *Innocents Abroad;* original below.]

The address is all set down in the notes, and there also exists the first rough draft, with the emendations in his own hand. He deplores the time it required:

That job is over. Writing addresses to emperors is not my strong suit. However, if it is not as good as it might be it



ADDRESS.

To His Imperial Majesty:—
ALEXANDER II., Emperor of Russia.

We, a handful of citizens of the United States, travelling for recreation—and unostentatiously, as becomes our unofficial state,—have no excuse for presenting ourselves before your Majesty, save a desire to offer our grateful acknowledgments to the Lord of a Realm which, through good and through evil report, has been the steadfast friend of our Native Land.

We could not presume thus to present ourselves did we not know that the words we speak and the sentiments we utter, reflect the thoughts and feelings of all our countrymen; from the green hills of New England to the snowy peaks of the far Pacific. Though few in number, we utter the voice of a Nation.

One of the brightest pages that has graced the worlds' history; since written history had its birth, was recorded by your Majesty's hand when it loosed the bonds of twenty millions of men, and Americans can but esteem it a privilege to do honour to a ruler who has wrought so great a deed; The lesson then taught us we have profited by, and our Country is as free in fact today, as before it was in name.

America owes much to Russia: is indebted to her in many ways; and chiefly for her unwavering friendship in the season of her greatest need. That the same friendship may be hers in time to come, we confidently pray; that she is, and will be gratefull to Russia, and to her Sovereign for it, we know full well; that she will ever forfeit it by any premeditated, unjust act, or unfair course; it would be treason to believe.

Samuel Clemens, Wm Gibson, T D Crocker, S N Sanford, P Kinney, Committee

Respectfully tendered on behalf of the excursionists of the A--merican Steam Yacht Quaker City

Yalta August 26th 1867.

doesn't signify—the other committeemen ought to have helped me write it; they had nothing to do, and I had my hands full. But for bothering with this I would have caught up entirely with my New York *Tribune* correspondence and nearly up with the San Francisco.

They wanted him also to read the address to the Emperor, but he pointed out that the American consul was the proper person for that office. He tells how the address was presented:

August 26th. The Imperial carriages were in waiting at eleven, and at twelve we were at the palace. . . .

The Consul for Odessa read the address and the Czar said frequently, "Good—very good, indeed"—and at the close, "I am very, very grateful."

It was not improper for him to set down all this, and much more, in his own note-book—not then for publication. It was in fact a very proper record—for to-day.

One incident of the imperial audience Mark Twain omitted from his book, perhaps because the humor of it had not yet become sufficiently evident. "The humorous perception of a thing is a pretty slow growth sometimes," he once remarked. It was about seventeen years before he could laugh enjoyably at a slight mistake he made at the Emperor's reception. He set down a memorandum of it, then, for fear it might be lost:

There were a number of great dignitaries of the Empire there, and although, as a general thing, they were dressed in citizen's clothing, I observed that the most of them wore a very small piece of ribbon in the lapels of their coats. That little touch of color struck my fancy, and it seemed to me a good idea to add it to my own attractions; not imagining that it had any special significance. So I stepped aside, hunted up a bit of red ribbon, and ornamented my lapel with it. Presently, Count Festetics, the Grand Master of ceremonies, and the only man there who was gorgeously arrayed, in full official costume, began to show

me a great many attentions. He was particularly polite, and pleasant, and anxious to be of service to me. Presently, he asked me what order of nobility I belonged to? I said, "I didn't belong to any." Then he asked me what order of knighthood I belonged to? I said, "None." Then he asked me what the red ribbon in my buttonhole stood for? I saw, at once, what an ass I had been making of myself, and was accordingly confused and embarrassed. I said the first thing that came into my mind, and that was that the ribbon was merely the symbol of a club of journalists to which I belonged, and I was not pursued with any more of Count Festetic's attentions.

Later, I got on very familiar terms with an old gentleman, whom I took to be the head gardener, and walked him all about the gardens, slipping my arm into his without invitation, yet without demur on his part, and by and by was confused again when I found that he was *not* a gardener at all, but the Lord High Admiral of Russia! I almost made up my mind that I would never call on an Emperor again.

Like all Mediterranean excursionists, those first pilgrims were insatiable collectors of curios, costumes, and all manner of outlandish things. Dan Slote had the state-room hung and piled with such gleanings. At Constantinople his room-mate writes:

I thought Dan had got the state-room pretty full of rubbish at last, but awhile ago his dragoman arrived with a brand-new ghastly tombstone of the Oriental pattern, with his name handsomely carved and gilted on it in Turkish characters. That fellow will buy a Circassian slave next.

It was Church, Denny, Jack, Davis, Dan, Moult, and Mark Twain who made the "long trip" through Syria from Beirut to Jerusalem with their elaborate camping outfit and decrepit nags "Jericho," "Baalbec," and the rest. It was better camping than that Humboldt journey of six years before, though the horses were not so dissimilar, and altogether it was a hard, nerve-racking experience,

climbing the arid hills of Palestine in that torrid summer heat. Nobody makes that trip in summer-time now. Tourists hurry out of Syria before the first of April, and they do not go back before November. One brief quotation from Mark Twain's book gives us an idea of what that early party of pilgrims had to undergo:

> We left Damascus at noon and rode across the plain a couple of hours, and then the party stopped a while in the shade of some fig-trees to give me a chance to rest. It was the hottest day we had seen yet—the sun-flames shot down like the shafts of fire that stream out before a blow-pipe; the rays seemed to fall in a deluge on the head and pass downward like rain from a roof. I imagined I could distinguish between the floods of rays. I thought I could tell when each flood struck my head, when it reached my shoulders, and when the next one came. It was terrible.

He had been ill with cholera at Damascus, a light attack; but any attack of that dread disease is serious enough. He tells of this in the book, but he does not mention, either in the book or in his notes, the attack which Dan Slote had some days later. It remained for William F. Church, of the party, to relate that incident, for it was the kind of thing that Mark Twain was not likely to record, or even to remember. Doctor Church was a deacon with orthodox views and did not approve of Mark Twain; he thought him sinful, irreverent, profane.

"He was the worst man I ever knew," Church said; then he added, "And the *best*."

What happened was this: At the end of a terrible day of heat, when the party had camped on the edge of a squalid Syrian village, Dan was taken suddenly ill. It was cholera, beyond doubt. Dan could not go on—he might never go on. The chances were that way. It was a serious matter all around. To wait with Dan meant to upset their travel schedule—it might mean to miss the ship. Consultation was held and a resolution passed

(the pilgrims were always passing resolutions) to provide for Dan as well as possible, and leave him behind. Clemens, who had remained with Dan, suddenly appeared and said:

"Gentlemen, I understand that you are going to leave Dan Slote here alone. I'll be d—d if I do!"

And he didn't. He stayed there and brought Dan into Jerusalem, a few days late, but convalescent.

Perhaps *most* of them were not always reverent during that Holy Land trip. It was a trying journey, and after fierce days of desert hills the reaction might not always spare even the holiest memories. Jack was particularly sinful. When they learned the price for a boat on Galilee, and the deacons who had traveled nearly half around the world to sail on that sacred water were confounded by the charge, Jack said:

"Well, Denny, do you wonder now that Christ walked?"

It was the irreverent Jack who one morning (they had camped the night before by the ruins of Jericho) refused to get up to see the sun rise across the Jordan. Deacon Church went to his tent.

"Jack, my boy, get up. Here is the place where the Israelites crossed over into the Promised Land, and beyond are the mountains of Moab, where Moses lies buried."

"Moses who!" said Jack.

"Oh, Jack, my boy, Moses, the great lawgiver—who led the Israelites out of Egypt—forty years through the wilderness—to the Promised Land."

"Forty years!" said Jack. "How far was it?"

"It was three hundred miles, Jack; a great wilderness, and he brought them through in safety."

Jack regarded him with scorn. "Huh, Moses—*three hundred miles—forty years*—why, Ben Holiday would have brought them through in *thirty-six hours!*"[1]

[1] Ben Holiday, owner of the Overland stages, and a man of great executive ability. This incident, a true one, is more elaborately told in *Roughing It*, but it seems pertinent here.

Jack probably learned more about the Bible during that trip—its history and its heroes—than during all his former years. Nor was Jack the only one of that group thus benefited. The sacred landmarks of Palestine inspire a burning interest in the Scriptures, and Mark Twain probably did not now regret those early Sunday-school lessons; certainly he did not fail to review them exhaustively on that journey. His note-books fairly overflow with Bible references; the Syrian chapters in *The Innocents Abroad* are permeated with the poetry and legendary beauty of the Bible story. The little Bible he carried on that trip, bought in Constantinople, was well worn by the time they reached the ship again at Jaffa. He must have read it with a large and persistent interest; also with a double benefit. For, besides the knowledge acquired, he was harvesting a profit—probably unsuspected at the time—*viz.*, the influence of the most direct and beautiful English—the English of the King James version—which could not fail to affect his own literary method at that impressionable age. We have already noted his earlier admiration for that noble and simple poem, "The Burial of Moses," which in the Palestine note-book is copied in full. All the tendency of his expression lay that way, and the intent consideration of stately Bible phrase and imagery could hardly fail to influence his mental processes. The very distinct difference of style, as shown in *The Innocents Abroad* and in his earlier writings, we may believe was in no small measure due to his study of the King James version during those weeks in Palestine.

He bought another Bible at Jerusalem; but it was not for himself. It was a little souvenir volume bound in olive and balsam wood, and on the fly-leaf is inscribed:

Mrs. Jane Clemens from her son. Jerusalem, Sept. 24, 1867.

There is one more circumstance of that long cruise—recorded neither in the book nor the notes—an incident brief, but of more importance in the life of Samuel Clemens than any heretofore set down. It occurred in the beautiful Bay of Smyrna, on the fifth or sixth of September, while the vessel lay there for the Ephesus trip.

Reference has been made to young Charles Langdon, of Elmira (the "Charley" once mentioned in the *Innocents*), as an admirer of Mark Twain. There was a good deal of difference in their ages, and they were seldom of the same party; but sometimes the boy invited the journalist to his cabin and, boy-like, exhibited his treasures. He had two sisters at home; and of Olivia, the youngest, he had brought a dainty miniature done on ivory in delicate tints—a sweet-pictured countenance, fine and spiritual. On that fateful day in the Bay of Smyrna, Samuel Clemens, visiting in young Langdon's cabin, was shown this portrait. He looked at it with long admiration, and spoke of it reverently, for the delicate face seemed to him to be something more than a mere human likeness. Each time he came, after that, he asked to see the picture, and once even begged to be allowed to take it away with him. The boy would not agree to this, and the elder man looked long and steadily at the miniature, resolving in his mind that some day he would meet the owner of that lovely face—a purpose for once in accord with that which the fates had arranged for him, in the day when all things were arranged, the day of the first beginning.

LXII

THE RETURN OF THE PILGRIMS

THE last note-book entry bears date of October 11th:

At sea, somewhere in the neighborhood of Malta. Very stormy.

Terrible death to be talked to death. The storm has blown two small land birds and a hawk to sea and they came on board. Sea full of flying-fish.

That is all. There is no record of the week's travel in Spain, which a little group of four made under the picturesque Gibraltar guide, Benunes, still living and quite as picturesque at last accounts. This side-trip is covered in a single brief paragraph in the *Innocents*, and the only account we have of it is in a home letter, from Cadiz, of October 24th:

We left Gibraltar at noon and rode to Algeciras (4 hours), thus dodging the quarantine—took dinner, and then rode horseback all night in a swinging trot, and at daylight took a caleche (2-wheeled vehicle), and rode 5 hours—then took cars and traveled till twelve at night. That landed us at Seville, and we were over the hard part of our trip and somewhat tired. Since then we have taken things comparatively easy, drifting around from one town to another and attracting a good deal of attention—for I guess strangers do not wander through Andalusia and the other southern provinces of Spain often. The country is precisely what it was when Don Quixote and Sancho Panza were possible characters.

But I see now what the glory of Spain must have been when it was under Moorish domination. No, I will not say that—but then when one is carried away, infatuated, entranced, with the wonders of the Alhambra and the supernatural beauty of the Alcazar, he is apt to overflow with admiration for the splendid intellects that created them.

We may wish that he had left us a chapter of that idyllic journey, but it will never be written now. A night or two before the vessel reached New York there was the usual good-by assembly, and for this occasion, at Mrs. Severance's request, Mark Twain wrote some verses. They were not especially notable, for meter and rhyme did not come easy to him, but one prophetic stanza is worth remembering. In the opening lines the passengers are referred to as a fleet of vessels, then follows:

> Lo! other ships of that parted fleet
> Shall suffer this fate or that:
> One shall be wrecked, another shall sink,
> Or ground on treacherous flat.
> Some shall be famed in many lands
> As good ships, fast and fair,
> And some shall strangely disappear,
> Men know not when or where.

The *Quaker City* returned to America on November 19, 1867, and Mark Twain found himself, if not famous, at least in very wide repute. The fifty-three letters to the *Alta* and the half-dozen to the New York *Tribune* had carried his celebrity into every corner of the States and Territories. Vivid, fearless, full of fresh color, humor, poetry, they came as a revelation to a public weary of the driveling, tiresome travel-letters of that period. They preached a new gospel in travel-literature: the gospel of seeing with an overflowing honesty; a gospel of sincerity in according praises to whatever seemed genuine, and ridicule to the things considered sham. It was the gospel

that Mark Twain would continue to preach during his whole career. It became his chief literary message to the world—a world waiting for that message.

Moreover, the letters were literature. He had received, from whatever source, a large and very positive literary impulse, a loftier conception and expression. It was at Tangier that he first struck the nobler chord, the throbbing cadence of human story.

> Here is a crumbling wall that was old when Columbus discovered America; old when Peter the Hermit roused the knightly men of the Middle Ages to arm for the first Crusade; old when Charlemagne and his paladins beleaguered enchanted castles and battled with giants and genii in the fabled days of the olden time; old when Christ and his disciples walked the earth; stood where it stands to-day when the lips of Memnon were vocal and men bought and sold in the streets of ancient Thebes.

This is pure poetry. He had never touched so high a strain before, but he reached it often after that, and always with an ever-increasing mastery and confidence. In Venice, in Rome, in Athens, through the Holy Land, his retrospection becomes a stately epic symphony, a processional crescendo that swings ever higher until it reaches that sublime strain, the ageless contemplation of the Sphinx. We cannot forego a paragraph or two of that word-picture:

> After years of waiting it was before me at last. The great face was so sad, so earnest, so longing, so patient. There was a dignity not of earth in its mien, and in its countenance a benignity such as never anything human wore. It was stone, but it seemed sentient. If ever image of stone thought, it was thinking. It was looking toward the verge of the landscape, yet looking at nothing—nothing but distance and vacancy. It was looking over and beyond everything of the present, and far into the past. . . . It was thinking of the wars of the departed ages; of the empires it had seen created and destroyed; of the

nations whose birth it had witnessed, whose progress it had watched, whose annihilation it had noted; of the joy and sorrow, the life and death, the grandeur and decay, of five thousand slow-revolving years. . . .

The Sphinx is grand in its loneliness; it is imposing in its magnitude; it is impressive in the mystery that hangs over its story. And there is that in the overshadowing majesty of this eternal figure of stone, with its accusing memory of the deeds of all ages, which reveals to one something of what we shall feel when we shall stand at last in the awful presence of God.

Then that closing word of Egypt. He elaborated it for the book, and did not improve it. Let us preserve here its original form.

We are glad to have seen Egypt. We are glad to have seen that old land which taught Greece her letters—and through Greece, Rome—and through Rome, the world—that venerable cradle of culture and refinement which *could* have humanized and civilized the Children of Israel, but allowed them to depart out of her borders savages—those Children whom we still revere, still love, and whose sad shortcomings we still excuse—not *because* they were savages, but because they were the chosen savages of God.

The Holy Land letters alone would have brought him fame. They presented the most graphic and sympathetic picture of Syrian travel ever written—one that will never become antiquated or obsolete so long as human nature remains unchanged. From beginning to end the tale is rarely, reverently told. Its closing paragraph has not been surpassed in the voluminous literature of that solemn land:

Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies. Where Sodom and Gomorrah reared their domes and towers that solemn sea now floods the plain, in whose bitter

waters no living thing exists—over whose waveless surface the blistering air hangs motionless and dead—about whose borders nothing grows but weeds and scattering tufts of cane, and that treacherous fruit that promises refreshment to parching lips, but turns to ashes at the touch. Nazareth is forlorn; about that ford of Jordan where the hosts of Israel entered the Promised Land with songs of rejoicing one finds only a squalid camp of fantastic Bedouins of the desert; Jericho the accursed lies a moldering ruin to-day, even as Joshua's miracle left it more than three thousand years ago; Bethlehem and Bethany, in their poverty and their humiliation, have nothing about them now to remind one that they once knew the high honor of the Saviour's presence; the hallowed spot where the shepherds watched their flocks by night, and where the angels sang Peace on earth, good-will to men, is untenanted by any living creature, and unblessed by any feature that is pleasant to the eye. Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient grandeur, and is become a pauper village; the riches of Solomon are no longer there to compel the admiration of visiting Oriental queens; the wonderful temple which was the pride and the glory of Israel is gone, and the Ottoman crescent is lifted above the spot where, on that most memorable day in the annals of the world, they reared the Holy Cross. The noted Sea of Galilee, where Roman fleets once rode at anchor and the disciples of the Saviour sailed in their ships, was long ago deserted by the devotees of war and commerce, and its borders are a silent wilderness; Capernaum is a shapeless ruin; Magdala is the home of beggared Arabs; Bethsaida and Chorazin have vanished from the earth, and the "desert places" round about them where thousands of men once listened to the Saviour's voice and ate the miraculous bread sleep in the hush of a solitude that is inhabited only by birds of prey and skulking foxes.

Palestine is desolate and unlovely. And why should it be otherwise? Can the *curse* of the Deity beautify a land?

It would be easy to quote pages here—a pictorial sequence from Gibraltar to Athens, from Athens to Egypt, a radiant panoramic march. In time he would write

technically better. He would avoid solecism, he would become a greater master of vocabulary and phrase, but in all the years ahead he would never match the lambent bloom and spontaneity of those fresh, first impressions of Mediterranean lands and seas. No need to mention the humor, the burlesque, the fearless, unrestrained ridicule of old masters and of sacred relics, so called. These we have kept familiar with much repetition. Only, the humor had grown more subtle, more restrained; the burlesque had become impersonal and harmless, the ridicule so frank and good-natured, that even the old masters themselves might have enjoyed it, while the most devoted churchman, unless blinded by bigotry, would find in it satisfaction, rather than sacrilege.

The final letter was written for the New York *Herald* after the arrival, and was altogether unlike those that preceded it. Gaily satirical and personal—inclusively so—it might better have been left unwritten, for it would seem to have given needless offense to a number of goodly people, whose chief sin was the sedateness of years. However, it is all past now, and those who were old then, and perhaps queer and pious and stingy, do not mind any more, and those who were young and frivolous have all grown old too, and most of them have set out on the still farther voyage. Somewhere, it may be, they gather, now and then, and lightly, tenderly recall their old-time journeying.

LXIII

IN WASHINGTON—A PUBLISHING PROPOSITION

CLEMENS remained but one day in New York. Senator Stewart had written, about the time of the departure of the *Quaker City*, offering him the position of private secretary—a position which was to give him leisure for literary work, with a supporting salary as well. Stewart no doubt thought it would be considerably to his advantage to have the brilliant writer and lecturer attached to his political establishment, and Clemens likewise saw possibilities in the arrangement. From Naples, in August, he had written accepting Stewart's offer; he lost no time now in discussing the matter in person.[1]

There seems to have been little difficulty in concluding the arrangement. When Clemens had been in Washington a week we find him writing:

DEAR FOLKS,—Tired and sleepy—been in Congress all day and making newspaper acquaintances. Stewart is to look up a clerkship in the Patent Office for Orion. Things necessarily move slowly where there is so much business and such armies of office-seekers to be attended to. I guess it will be all right. I *intend* it shall be all right.

I have 18 invitations to lecture, at $100 each, in various parts of the Union—have declined them all. I am for business now.

Belong on the *Tribune* Staff, and shall write occasionally.

[1] In a letter home, August 9th, he referred to the arrangement: "I wrote to Bill Stewart to-day accepting his private secretaryship in Washington, next winter."

Am offered the same berth to-day on the *Herald* by letter. Shall write Mr. Bennett and accept, as soon as I hear from *Tribune* that it will not interfere. Am pretty well known now —intend to be better known. Am hobnobbing with these old Generals and Senators and other humbugs for no good purpose. Don't have any more trouble making friends than I did in California. All serene. Good-by. Shall continue on the *Alta*.

Yours affectionately,

SAM.

224 F., cor. 14th.

P. S.—I room with Bill Stewart and board at Willard's Hotel.

But the secretary arrangement was a brief matter. It is impossible to conceive of Mark Twain as anybody's secretary, especially as the secretary of Senator Stewart.[1] Within a few weeks he was writing humorous accounts of "My Late Senatorial Secretaryship," "Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation," etc., all good-natured burlesque, but inspired, we may believe, by the change. These articles appeared in the New York *Tribune*, the New York *Citizen*, and the *Galaxy Magazine*.

There appears to have been no ill-feeling at this time between Clemens and Stewart. If so, it is not discoverable in any of the former's personal or newspaper correspondence. In fact, in his article relating to his "late senatorial secretaryship" he puts the joke, so far as it

[1] In Senator Stewart's memoirs he refers unpleasantly to Mark Twain, and after relating several incidents that bear only strained relations to the truth, states that when the writer returned from the Holy Land he (Stewart) offered him a secretaryship as a sort of charity. He adds that Mark Twain's behavior on his premises was such that a threat of a thrashing was necessary. The reason for such statements becomes apparent, however, when he adds that in *Roughing It* the author accuses him of cheating, prints a picture of him with a patch over his eye, and claims to have given him a sound thrashing, none of which statements, save only the one concerning the picture (an apparently unforgivable offense to his dignity), is true, as the reader may easily ascertain for himself.

is a joke, on Senator James W. Nye, probably as an additional punishment for Nye's failure to appear on the night of his lecture. He established headquarters with a brilliant newspaper correspondent named Riley. "One of the best men in Washington—or elsewhere," he tells us in a brief sketch of that person.[1] He had known Riley in San Francisco; the two were congenial, and settled down to their several undertakings.

Clemens was chiefly concerned over two things: he wished to make money and he wished to secure a government appointment for Orion. He had used up the most of his lecture accumulations, and was moderately in debt. His work was in demand at good rates, for those days, and with working opportunity he could presently dispose of his financial problem. The *Tribune* was anxious for letters; the *Enterprise* and *Alta* were waiting for them; the *Herald*, the Chicago *Tribune*, the magazines—all had solicited contributions; the lecture bureaus pursued him. Personally his outlook was bright.

The appointment for Orion was a different matter. The powers were not especially interested in a brother; there were too many brothers and assorted relatives on the official waiting-list already. Clemens was offered appointments for himself—a consulship, a postmastership; even that of San Francisco. From the Cabinet down, the Washington political contingent had read his travel-letters, and was ready to recognize officially the author of them in his own person and personality.

Also, socially: Mark Twain found himself all at once in the midst of receptions, dinners, and speech-making; all very exciting, for a time at least, but not profitable, not conducive to work. At a dinner of the Washington Correspondents Club his response to the toast, "Women," was pronounced by Schuyler Colfax to be "the best after-

[1] See Riley, newspaper correspondent, *Sketches New and Old.*

dinner speech ever made." Certainly it was a refreshing departure from the prosy or clumsy-witted efforts common to that period. He was coming altogether into his own.[1]

He was not immediately interested in the matter of book publication. The *Jumping Frog* book was popular, and in England had been issued by Routledge; but the royalty returns were modest enough and slow in arrival. His desire was for prompter results. His interest in book publication had never been an eager one, and related mainly to the advertising it would furnish, which he did not now need; or to the money return, in which he had no great faith. Yet at this very moment a letter for him was lying in the *Tribune* office in New York which would bring the book idea into first prominence and spell the beginning of his fortune.

Among those who had read and found delight in the *Tribune* letters was Elisha Bliss, Jr., of the American Publishing Company, of Hartford. Bliss was a shrewd and energetic man, with a keen appreciation for humor and the American fondness for that literary quality. He had recently undertaken the management of a Hartford concern, and had somewhat alarmed its conservative directorate by publishing books that furnished entertainment to the reader as well as moral instruction. Only his success in paying dividends justified this heresy and averted his downfall. Two days after the arrival of the *Quaker City* Bliss wrote the letter above mentioned. It ran as follows:

OFFICE OF THE AMERICAN PUBLISHING CO.
HARTFORD, CONN., *November 21, 1867.*

SAMUEL L. CLEMENS, ESQ.,
Tribune Office, New York.

DEAR SIR,—We take the liberty to address you this, in place of a letter which we had recently written and were about to forward to

[1] This is the first of Mark Twain's after-dinner speeches to be preserved. The reader will find it complete, as reported next day, in Appendix G, at the end of last volume.

you, not knowing your arrival home was expected so soon. We are desirous of obtaining from you a work of some kind, perhaps compiled from your letters from the past, etc., with such interesting additions as may be proper. We are the publishers of A. D. Richardson's works, and flatter ourselves that we can give an author as favorable terms and do as full justice to his productions as any other house in the country. We are perhaps the oldest subscription house in the country, and have never failed to give a book an *immense* circulation. We sold about 100,000 copies of Richardson's F. D. and E. (*Field, Dungeon and Escape*), and are now printing 41,000 of *Beyond the Mississippi*, and large orders ahead. If you have any thought of writing a book, or could be induced to do so, we should be pleased to see you, and will do so. Will you do us the favor of reply at once, at your earliest convenience.

Very truly etc.,
E. Bliss, Jr.,
Secretary.

After ten days' delay this letter was forwarded to the *Tribune* bureau in Washington, where Clemens received it. He replied promptly.

Washington, *December 2, 1867.*

E. Bliss, Jr., Esq.,
Secretary American Publishing Co.

Dear Sir,—I only received your favor of November 21st last night, at the rooms of the Tribune Bureau here. It was forwarded from the Tribune office, New York, where it had lain eight or ten days. This will be a sufficient apology for the seeming discourtesy of my silence.

I wrote fifty-two letters for the San Francisco *Alta California* during the *Quaker City* excursion, about half of which number have been printed thus far. The *Alta* has few exchanges in the East, and I suppose scarcely any of these letters have been copied on this side of the Rocky Mountains. I could weed them of their chief faults of construction and inelegancies of expression, and make a volume that would be more acceptable in many respects than any I could now write. When those letters were written my impressions were fresh, but now they have lost that freshness; they were warm then, they are cold now. I could strike out certain letters, and write new ones wherewith to supply their places. If you think such a book would suit your purpose, please drop me a line, specifying the size and general style of the volume when the matter ought

to be ready; whether it should have pictures in it or not; and particularly what your terms with me would be, and what amount of money I might possibly make out of it. The latter clause has a degree of importance for me which is almost beyond my own comprehension. But you understand that, of course.

I have other propositions for a book, but have doubted the propriety of interfering with good newspaper engagements, except my way as an author could be demonstrated to be plain before me. But I know Richardson, and learned from him some months ago something of an idea of the subscription plan of publishing. If that is your plan invariably it looks safe.

I am on the New York *Tribune* staff here as an "occasional," among other things, and a note from you addressed to

Very truly, etc.,

SAM. L. CLEMENS,

New York Tribune Bureau, Washington,

will find me, without fail.

The exchange of those two letters marked the beginning of one of the most notable publishing connections in American literary history.

Consummation, however, was somewhat delayed. Bliss was ill when the reply came, and could not write again in detail until nearly a month later. In this letter he recited the profits made by Richardson and others through subscription publication, and named the royalties paid. Richardson had received four per cent. of the sale price, a small enough rate for these later days; but the cost of manufacture was larger then, and the sale and delivery of books through agents has ever been an expensive process. Even Horace Greeley had received but a fraction more on his *Great American Conflict*. Bliss especially suggested and emphasized a "*humorous* work—that is to say, a work *humorously inclined*." He added that they had two arrangements for paying authors: outright purchase, and royalty. He invited a meeting in New York to arrange terms.

LXIV

OLIVIA LANGDON

CLEMENS did in fact go to New York that same evening, to spend Christmas with Dan Slote, and missed Bliss's second letter. It was no matter. Fate had his affairs properly in hand, and had prepared an event of still larger moment than the publication even of *Innocents Abroad*. There was a pleasant reunion at Dan Slote's. He wrote home about it:

> Charley Langdon, Jack Van Nostrand, Dan and I (all *Quaker City* night-hawks) had a blow-out at Dan's house and a lively talk over old times. I just laughed till my sides ached at some of our reminiscences. It was the unholiest gang that ever cavorted through Palestine, but those are the best boys in the world.

This, however, was not the event; it was only preliminary to it. We are coming to that now. At the old St. Nicholas Hotel, which stood on the west side of Broadway between Spring and Broome streets, there were stopping at this time Jervis Langdon, a wealthy coal-dealer and mine-owner of Elmira, his son Charles and his daughter Olivia, whose pictured face Samuel Clemens had first seen in the Bay of Smyrna one September day. Young Langdon had been especially anxious to bring his distinguished *Quaker City* friend and his own people together, and two days before Christmas Samuel Clemens was invited to dine at the hotel. He went very willingly. The lovely face of that miniature had been often a part of

his waking dreams. For the first time now he looked upon its reality. Long afterward he said:

"It is forty years ago. From that day to this she has never been out of my mind."

Charles Dickens was in New York then, and gave a reading that night in Steinway Hall. The Langdons went, and Samuel Clemens accompanied them. He remembered afterward that Dickens wore a black velvet coat with a fiery red flower in his buttonhole, and that he read the storm scene from Copperfield—the death of James Steerforth. But he remembered still more clearly the face and dress of that slender girlish figure at his side.

Olivia Langdon was twenty-two years old at this time, delicate as the miniature he had seen, fragile to look upon, though no longer with the shattered health of her girlhood. At sixteen, through a fall upon the ice, she had become a complete invalid, confined to her bed for two years, unable to sit, even when supported, unable to lie in any position except upon her back. Great physicians and surgeons, one after another, had done their best for her but she had failed steadily until every hope had died. Then, when nothing else was left to try, a certain Doctor Newton, of spectacular celebrity, who cured by "laying on of hands," was brought to Elmira to see her. Doctor Newton came into the darkened room and said:

"Open the windows—we must have light!"

They protested that she could not bear the light, but the windows were opened. Doctor Newton came to the bedside of the helpless girl, delivered a short, fervent prayer, put his arm under her shoulders, and bade her sit up. She had not moved for two years, and the family were alarmed, but she obeyed, and he assisted her into a chair. Sensation came back to her limbs. With his assistance she even made a feeble attempt to walk. He left then, saying that she would gradually improve, and in time be well, though probably never very strong. On

the same day he healed a boy, crippled and drawn with fever.

It turned out as he had said. Olivia Langdon improved steadily, and now at twenty-two, though not robust—she was never that—she was comparatively well. Gentle, winning, lovable, she was the family idol, and Samuel Clemens joined in their worship from the moment of that first meeting.

Olivia Langdon, on her part, was at first dazed and fascinated, rather than attracted, by this astonishing creature, so unlike any one she had ever known. Her life had been circumscribed, her experiences of a simple sort. She had never seen anything resembling him before. Indeed, nobody had. Somewhat carelessly, even if correctly, attired; eagerly, rather than observantly, attentive; brilliant and startling, rather than cultured, of speech—a blazing human solitaire, unfashioned, unset, tossed by the drift of fortune at her feet. He disturbed rather than gratified her. She sensed his heresy toward the conventions and forms which had been her gospel; his bantering, indifferent attitude toward life—to her always so serious and sacred; she suspected that he even might have unorthodox views on matters of religion. When he had gone she somehow had the feeling that a great fiery meteor of unknown portent had swept across her sky.

To her brother, who was eager for her approval of his celebrity, Miss Langdon conceded admiration. As for her father, he did not qualify his opinion. With a hearty sense of humor, and a keen perception of sincerity and capability in men, Jervis Langdon accepted Samuel Clemens from the start, and remained his stanch admirer and friend. Clemens left that night with an invitation to visit Elmira by and by, and with the full intention of going—soon. Fate, however, had another plan. He did not see Elmira for the better part of a year.

He saw Miss Langdon again within the week. On

New-Year's Day he set forth to pay calls, after the fashion of the time—more lavish then than now. Miss Langdon was receiving with Miss Alice Hooker, a niece of Henry Ward Beecher, at the home of a Mrs. Berry; he decided to go there first. With young Langdon he arrived at eleven o'clock in the morning, and they did not leave until midnight. If his first impression upon Olivia Langdon had been meteoric, it would seem that he must now have become to her as a streaming comet that swept from zenith to horizon. One thing is certain: she had become to him the single, unvarying beacon of his future years. He visited Henry Ward Beecher on that trip and dined with him by invitation. Harriet Beecher Stowe was present, and others of that eminent family. Likewise his old *Quaker City* comrades, Moses S. and Emma Beach. It was a brilliant gathering, a conclave of intellectual gods —a triumph to be there for one who had been a printer-boy on the banks of the Mississippi, and only a little while before a miner with pick and shovel. It was gratifying to be so honored; it would be pleasant to write home; but the occasion lacked something too—everything, in fact—for when he ran his eye around the board the face of the minature was not there.

Still there were compensations; inadequate, of course, but pleasant enough to remember. It was Sunday evening and the party adjourned to Plymouth Church. After services Mr. Beecher invited him to return home with him for a quiet talk. Evidently they had a good time, for in the letter telling of these things Samuel Clemens said: "Henry Ward Beecher is a brick."

LXV

A CONTRACT WITH ELISHA BLISS, JR.

HE returned to Washington without seeing Miss Langdon again, though he would seem to have had permission to write—friendly letters. A little later (it was on the evening of January 9th) he lectured in Washington—on very brief notice indeed. The arrangement for his appearance had been made by a friend during his absence—"a friend," Clemens declared afterward, "not entirely sober at the time." To his mother he wrote:

> I scared up a doorkeeper and was ready at the proper time, and by pure good luck a tolerably good house assembled and I was saved. I hardly knew what I was going to talk about, but it went off in splendid style.

The title of the lecture delivered was "The Frozen Truth"—"more truth in the title than in the lecture," according to his own statement. What it dealt with is not remembered now. It had to do with the *Quaker City* trip, perhaps, and it seems to have brought a financial return which was welcome enough. Subsequently he delivered it elsewhere; though just how far the tour extended cannot be learned from the letters, and he had but little memory of it in later years.

There was some further correspondence with Bliss, then about the 21st of January (1868) Clemens made a trip to Hartford to settle the matter. Bliss had been particularly anxious to meet him personally and was a trifle disappointed with his appearance. Mark Twain's trav-

eling costume was neither new nor neat, and he was smoking steadily a pipe of power. His general make-up was hardly impressive.

Bliss's disturbance was momentary. Once he began to talk the rest did not matter. He was the author of those letters, and Bliss decided that personally he was even greater than they. The publisher, confined to his home with illness, offered him the hospitality of his household. Also, he made him two propositions: he would pay him ten thousand dollars cash for his copyright, or he would pay five per cent. royalty, which was a fourth more than Richardson had received. He advised the latter arrangement.

Clemens had already taken advice and had discussed the project a good deal with Richardson. The ten thousand dollars was a heavy temptation, but he withstood it and closed on the royalty basis—"the best business judgment I ever displayed," he was wont to declare. A letter written to his mother and sister near the end of this Hartford stay is worth quoting pretty fully here, for the information and "character" it contains. It bears date of January 24th.

This is a good week for me. I stopped in the *Herald* office, as I came through New York, to see the boys on the staff, and young James Gordon Bennett asked me to write twice a week, impersonally, for the *Herald*, and said if I would I might have full swing, and about anybody and everything I wanted to. I said I must have the very fullest possible swing, and he said, "All right." I said, "It's a contract—" and that settled that matter.

I'll make it a point to write *one* letter a week anyhow. But the *best* thing that has happened is here. This great American Publishing Company kept on trying to bargain with me for a book till I thought I would cut the matter short by coming up for a *talk*. I met Henry Ward Beecher in Brooklyn, and with his usual whole-souled way of dropping his own work to give other people a lift when he gets a chance, he said: "Now, here,

you are one of the talented men of the age—nobody is going to deny that—but in matters of business I don't suppose you know more than enough to come in when it rains. I'll tell you what to do and how to do it." And he did.

And I listened well, and then came up here and made a splendid contract for a *Quaker City* book of 5 or 600 large pages, with illustrations, the manuscript to be placed in the publisher's hands by the middle of July.[1] My percentage is to be a fourth more than they have ever paid any author except Greeley. Beecher will be surprised, I guess, when he hears this.

These publishers get off the most tremendous editions of their books you can imagine. I shall write to the *Enterprise* and *Alta* every week, as usual, I guess, and to the *Herald* twice a week, occasionally to the *Tribune* and the magazines (I have a stupid article in the *Galaxy*, just issued), but I am not going to write to this and that and the other paper any more.

I have had a tiptop time here for a few days (guest of Mr. Jno. Hooker's family—Beecher's relatives—in a general way of Mr. Bliss also, who is head of the publishing firm). Puritans are mighty straight-laced, and they won't let me smoke in the parlor, but the Almighty don't make any better people.

I have to make a speech at the annual *Herald* dinner on the 6th of May.

So the book, which would establish his claim to a peerage in the literary land, was arranged for, and it remained only to prepare the manuscript, a task which he regarded as not difficult. He had only to collate the *Alta* and *Tribune* letters, edit them, and write such new matter as would be required for completeness.

Returning to Washington, he plunged into work with his usual terrific energy, preparing the copy—in the mean time writing newspaper correspondence and sketches that would bring immediate return. In addition to his regular contributions, he entered into a syndicate arrange-

[1] The contract was not a formal one. There was an exchange of letters agreeing to the terms, but no joint document was drawn until October 16 (1868).

ment with John Swinton (brother of William Swinton, the historian) to supply letters to a list of newspapers.

"I have written seven long newspaper letters and a short magazine article in less than two days," he wrote home, and by the end of January he had also prepared several chapters of his book.

The San Francisco postmastership was suggested to him again, but he put the temptation behind him. He refers to this more than once in his home letters, and it is clear that he wavered.

> Judge Field said if I wanted the place he could pledge me the President's appointment, and Senator Conners said he would *guarantee* me the Senate's confirmation. It was a great temptation, but it would render it impossible to fill my book contract, and I had to drop the idea. . . .
>
> And besides I did not *want* the office.

He made this final decision when he heard that the chief editor of the *Alta* wanted the place, and he now threw his influence in that quarter. "I would not take ten thousand dollars out of a friend's pocket," he said.

But then suddenly came the news from Goodman that the *Alta* publishers had copyrighted his *Quaker City* letters and proposed bringing them out in a book, to reimburse themselves still further on their investment. This was sharper than a serpent's tooth. Clemens got confirmation of the report by telegraph. By the same medium he protested, but to no purpose. Then he wrote a letter and sat down to wait. He reported his troubles to Orion:

> I have made a superb contract for a book, and have prepared the first ten chapters of the sixty or eighty, but I will bet it never sees the light. Don't you let the folks at home hear that. That thieving *Alta* copyrighted the letters, and now shows no disposition to let me use them. I have done all I can by telegraph, and now await the final result by mail. I only charged

them for 50 letters what (even in) greenbacks would amount to less than two thousand dollars, intending to write a good deal for high-priced Eastern papers, and now they want to publish my letters in book form themselves to get back that pitiful sum.

Orion was by this time back from Nevada, setting type in St. Louis. He was full of schemes, as usual, and his brother counsels him freely. Then he says:

We chase phantoms half the days of our lives. It is well if we learn wisdom even then, and save the other half.

I am in for it. I must go on chasing them, until I marry, *then* I am done with literature and all other bosh—that is, literature wherewith to please the general public.

I shall write to please myself then.

He closes by saying that he rather expects to go with Anson Burlingame on the Chinese embassy. Clearly he was pretty hopeless as to his book prospects.

His first meeting with General Grant occurred just at this time. In one of his home letters he mentions, rather airily, that he will drop in some day on the General for an interview; and at last, through Mrs. Grant, an appointment was made for a Sunday evening when the General would be at home. He was elated with the prospect of an interview; but when he looked into the imperturbable, square, smileless face of the soldier he found himself, for the first time in his life, without anything particular to say. Grant nodded slightly and waited. His caller wished something would happen. It did. His inspiration returned.

"General," he said, "I seem to be a little embarrassed. Are you?"

That broke the ice. There were no further difficulties.[1]

[1] Mark Twain has variously related this incident. It is given here in accordance with the letters of the period.

LXVI

BACK TO SAN FRANCISCO

A REPLY came from the *Alta*, but it was not promising. It spoke rather vaguely of prior arrangements and future possibilities. Clemens gathered that under certain conditions he might share in the profits of the venture. There was but one thing to do; he knew those people—some of them—Colonel McComb and a Mr. McCrellish intimately. He must confer with them in person.

He was weary of Washington, anyway. The whole pitiful machinery of politics disgusted him. In his notebook he wrote:

> Whiskey is taken into the committee rooms in demijohns and carried out in demagogues.

And in a letter:

> This is a place to get a poor opinion of everybody in. There are some pitiful intellects in this Congress! There isn't one man in Washington in civil office who has the brains of Anson Burlingame, and I suppose if China had not seized and saved his great talents to the world this government would have discarded him when his time was up.[1]

Furthermore, he was down on the climate of Washington. He decided to go to San Francisco and see "those *Alta* thieves face to face." Then, if a book resulted, he

[1] Anson Burlingame had by this time become China's special ambassador to the nations.

could prepare it there among friends. Also, he could lecture.

He had been anxious to visit his people before sailing, but matters were too urgent to permit delay. He obtained from Bliss an advance of royalty and took passage, by way of Aspinwall, on the side-wheel steamer *Henry Chauncey*, a fine vessel for those days. The name of Mark Twain was already known on the isthmus, and when it was learned he had arrived on the *Chauncey* a delegation welcomed him on the wharf, and provided him with refreshments and entertainment. Mr. Tracy Robinson, a poet, long a resident of that southern land, was one of the group. Beyond the isthmus Clemens fell in again with his old captain, Ned Wakeman, who during the trip told him the amazing dream that in due time would become *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*. He made the first draft of this story soon after his arrival in San Francisco, as a sort of travesty of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *Gates Ajar*, then very popular. Clemens, then and later, had a high opinion of Capt. Ned Wakeman's dream, but his story of it would pass through several stages before finally reaching the light of publication.[1]

In San Francisco matters turned out as he had hoped. Colonel McComb was his stanch friend; McCrellish and Woodward, the proprietors, presently conceded that they had already received good value for the money paid. The author agreed to make proper acknowledgments to the *Alta* in his preface, and the matter was settled with friendliness all around.

The way was now clear, the book assured. First, however, he must provide himself with funds. He de-

[1] Mr. John P. Vollmer, now of Lewiston, Idaho, a companion of that voyage, writes of a card game which took place beyond the isthmus. The notorious crippled gambler, "Smithy," figured in it, and it would seem to have furnished the inspiration for the exciting story in Chapter XXXVI of the Mississippi book.

livered a lecture, with the *Quaker City* excursion as his subject. On the 5th of May he wrote to Bliss:

> I lectured here on the trip the other night; over $1,600 in gold in the house; every seat taken and paid for before night.

He reports that he is steadily at work, and expects to start East with the completed manuscript about the middle of June.

But this was a miscalculation. Clemens found that the letters needed more preparation than he had thought. His literary vision and equipment had vastly altered since the beginning of that correspondence. Some of the chapters he rewrote; others he eliminated entirely. It required two months of fairly steady work to put the big manuscript together.

Some of the new chapters he gave to Bret Harte for the *Overland Monthly*, then recently established. Harte himself was becoming a celebrity about this time. His "Luck of Roaring Camp" and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," published in early numbers of the *Overland*, were making a great stir in the East, arousing there a good deal more enthusiasm than in the magazine office or the city of their publication. That these two friends, each supreme in his own field, should have entered into their heritage so nearly at the same moment, is one of the many seemingly curious coincidences of literary history.

Clemens now concluded to cover his lecture circuit of two years before. He was assured that it would be throwing away a precious opportunity not to give his new lecture to his old friends. The result justified that opinion. At Virginia, at Carson, and elsewhere he was received like a returned conqueror. He might have been accorded a Roman triumph had there been time and paraphernalia. Even the robbers had reformed, and

entire safety was guaranteed him on the Divide between Virginia and Gold Hill. At Carson he called on Mrs. Curry, as in the old days, and among other things told her how snow from the Lebanon Mountains is brought to Damascus on the backs of camels.

"Sam," she said, "that's just one of your yarns, and if you tell it in your lecture to-night I'll get right up and say so."

But he did tell it, for it was a fact; and though Mrs. Curry did not rise to deny it she shook her finger at him in a way he knew.

He returned to San Francisco and gave one more lecture, the last he would ever give in California. His preparatory advertising for that occasion was wholly unique, characteristic of him to the last degree. It assumed the form of a handbill of protest, supposed to have been issued by the foremost citizens of San Francisco, urging him to return to the States without inflicting himself further upon them. As signatures he made free with the names of prominent individuals, followed by those of organizations, institutions, "Various Benevolent Societies, Citizens on Foot and Horseback, and fifteen hundred in the Steerage."

Following this (on the same bill) was his reply, "To the fifteen hundred and others," in which he insisted on another hearing:

> I will torment the people if I want to. . . . It only costs the people $1 apiece, and if they can't stand it what do they stay here for? . . . My last lecture was not as fine as I thought it was, but I have submitted this discourse to several able critics, and they have pronounced it good. Now, therefore, why should I withhold it?

He promised positively to sail on the 6th of July if they would let him talk just this once. Continuing, the handbill presented a second protest, signed by the various clubs and business firms; also others bearing variously

the signatures of the newspapers, and the clergy, ending with the brief word:

You had *better* go. Yours, CHIEF OF POLICE.

All of which drollery concluded with his announcement of place and date of his lecture, with still further gaiety at the end. Nothing short of a seismic cataclysm—an earthquake, in fact—could deter a San Francisco audience after that. Mark Twain's farewell address, given at the Mercantile Library July 2 (1868), doubtless remains today the leading literary event in San Francisco's history.[1]

He sailed July 6th by the Pacific mail steamer *Montana* to Acapulco, caught the *Henry Chauncey* at Aspinwall, reached New York on the 28th, and a day or two later had delivered his manuscript at Hartford.

But a further difficulty had arisen. Bliss was having troubles himself, this time, with his directors. Many reports of Mark Twain's new book had been traveling the rounds of the press, some of which declared it was to be irreverent, even blasphemous, in tone. The title selected, *The New Pilgrim's Progress*, was in itself a sacrilege. Hartford was a conservative place; the American Publishing Company directors were of orthodox persuasion. They urged Bliss to relieve the company of this impending disaster of heresy. When the author arrived one or more of them labored with him in person, without avail. As for Bliss, he was stanch; he believed in the book thoroughly, from every standpoint. He declared if the company refused to print it he would resign the management and publish the book himself. This was an alarming suggestion to the stockholders. Bliss had returned dividends—a boon altogether too rare in the company's former history. The objectors retired and were heard of no more. The manuscript was placed in

[1] Copy of the lecture announcement, complete, will be found in Appendix H, at the end of last volume.

the hands of Fay and Cox, illustrators, with an order for about two hundred and fifty pictures.

Fay and Cox turned it over to True Williams, one of the well-known illustrators of that day. Williams was a man of great talent—of fine imagination and sweetness of spirit—but it was necessary to lock him in a room when industry was required, with nothing more exciting than cold water as a beverage. Clemens himself aided in the illustrating by obtaining of Moses S. Beach photographs from the large collection he had brought home.

LXVII

A VISIT TO ELMIRA

MEANTIME he had skilfully obtained a renewal of the invitation to spend a week in the Langdon home. He meant to go by a fast train, but, with his natural gift for misunderstanding time-tables, of course took a slow one, telegraphing his approach from different stations along the road. Young Langdon concluded to go down the line as far as Waverly to meet him. When the New York train reached there the young man found his guest in the smoking-car, travel-stained and distressingly clad. Mark Twain was always scrupulously neat and correct of dress in later years, but in that earlier day neatness and style had not become habitual and did not give him comfort. Langdon greeted him warmly but with doubt. Finally he summoned courage to say, hesitatingly:

"You've got some other clothes, haven't you?"

The arriving guest was not in the least disturbed.

"Oh yes," he said with enthusiasm, "I've got a fine brand-new outfit in this bag, all but a hat. It will be late when we get in, and I won't see any one to-night. You won't know me in the morning. We'll go out early and get a hat."

This was a large relief to the younger man, and the rest of the journey was happy enough. True to promise, the guest appeared at daylight correctly, even elegantly clad, and an early trip to the shops secured the hat. A gay and happy week followed—a week during which Samuel Clemens realized more fully than ever that in his heart

there was room for only one woman in all the world: Olivia Langdon—"Livy," as they all called her—and as the day of departure drew near it may be that the gentle girl had made some discoveries, too.

No word had passed between them. Samuel Clemens had the old-fashioned Southern respect for courtship conventions, and for what, in that day at least, was regarded as honor. On the morning of the final day he said to young Langdon:

"Charley, my week is up, and I must go home."

The young man expressed a regret which was genuine enough, though not wholly unqualified. His older sister, Mrs. Crane, leaving just then for a trip to the White Mountains, had said:

"Charley, I am sure Mr. Clemens is after our Livy. You mustn't let him carry her off before our return."

The idea was a disturbing one. The young man did not urge his guest to prolong his visit. He said:

"We'll have to stand it, I guess, but you mustn't leave before to-night."

"I *ought* to go by the first train," Clemens said, gloomily. "I am in love."

"In what!"

"In love—with your sister, and I ought to get away from here."

The young man was now very genuinely alarmed. To him Mark Twain was a highly gifted, fearless, robust man—a man's man—and as such altogether admirable—lovable. But Olivia—Livy—she was to him little short of a saint. *No* man was good enough for her, certainly not this adventurous soldier of letters from the West. Delightful he was beyond doubt, adorable as a companion, but *not* a companion for Livy.

"Look here, Clemens," he said, when he could get his voice. "There's a train in half an hour. I'll help you catch it. Don't wait till to-night. Go now."

Clemens shook his head.

"No, Charley," he said, in his gentle drawl, "I want to enjoy your hospitality a little longer. I promise to be circumspect, and I'll go to-night."

That night, after dinner, when it was time to take the New York train, a light two-seated wagon was at the gate. The coachman was in front, and young Langdon and his guest took the back seat. For some reason the seat had not been locked in its place, and when, after the good-bys, the coachman touched the horse it made a quick spring forward, and the back seat, with both passengers, described a half-circle and came down with force on the cobbled street. Neither passenger was seriously hurt; Clemens not at all—only dazed a little for a moment. Then came an inspiration; here was a chance to prolong his visit. Evidently it was not intended that he should take that train. When the Langdon household gathered around with restoratives he did not recover too quickly. He allowed them to support or carry him into the house and place him in an arm-chair and apply remedies. The young daughter of the house especially showed anxiety and attention. This was pure happiness. He was perjuring himself, of course, but they say Jove laughs at such things.

He recovered in a day or two, but the wide hospitality of the handsome Langdon home was not only offered now; it was enforced. He was still there two weeks later, after which he made a trip to Cleveland to confide in Mrs. Fairbanks how he intended to win Livy Langdon for his wife.

LXVIII

THE REV. "JOE" TWICHELL

HE returned to Hartford to look after the progress of his book. Some of it was being put into type, and with his mechanical knowledge of such things he was naturally interested in the process.

He made his headquarters with the Blisses, then living at 821 Asylum Avenue, and read proof in a little upper room, where the lamp was likely to be burning most of the time, where the atmosphere was nearly always blue with smoke, and the window-sill full of cigar butts. Mrs. Bliss took him into the quiet social life of the neighborhood—to small church receptions, society gatherings and the like—all of which he seemed to enjoy. Most of the dwellers in that neighborhood were members of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, then recently completed, all but the spire. It was a cultured circle, well-off in the world's goods, its male members, for the most part, concerned in various commercial ventures.

The church stood almost across the way from the Bliss home, and Mark Twain, with his picturesque phrasing, referred to it as the "stub-tailed church," on account of its abbreviated spire; also, later, with a knowledge of its prosperous membership, as the "Church of the Holy Speculators." He was at an evening reception in the home of one of its members when he noticed a photograph of the unfinished building framed and hanging on the wall.

"Why, yes," he commented, in his slow fashion, "this is the 'Church of the Holy Speculators.'"

"Sh," cautioned Mrs. Bliss. "Its pastor is just behind you. He knows your work and wants to meet you." Turning, she said: "Mr. Twichell, this is Mr. Clemens. Most people know him as Mark Twain."

And so, in this casual fashion, he met the man who was presently to become his closest personal friend and counselor, and would remain so for more than forty years.

Joseph Hopkins Twichell was a man about his own age, athletic and handsome, a student and a devout Christian, yet a man familiar with the world, fond of sports, with an exuberant sense of humor and a wide understanding of the frailties of humankind. He had been "port waist oar" at Yale, and had left college to serve with General "Dan" Sickles as a chaplain who had followed his duties not only in the camp, but on the field.

Mention has already been made of Mark Twain's natural leaning toward ministers of the gospel, and the explanation of it is easier to realize than to convey. He was hopelessly unorthodox—rankly rebellious as to creeds. Anything resembling cant or the curtailment of mental liberty roused only his resentment and irony. Yet something in his heart always warmed toward any laborer in the vineyard, and if we could put the explanation into a single sentence, perhaps we might say it was because he could meet them on that wide, common ground —*sympathy with mankind.* Mark Twain's creed, then and always, may be put into three words, "liberty, justice, humanity." It may be put into one word, "humanity."

Ministers always loved Mark Twain. They did not always approve of him, but they adored him. The Rev. Mr. Rising, of the Comstock, was an early example of his ministerial friendships, and we have seen that Henry Ward Beecher cultivated his company. In a San Francisco letter of two years before, Mark Twain wrote his mother, thinking it would please her:

I am as thick as thieves with the Reverend Stebbins. I am laying for the Reverend Scudder and the Reverend Doctor Stone. I am running on preachers now altogether, and I find them gay.

So it may be that his first impulse toward Joseph Twichell was due to the fact that he was a young member of that army whose mission is to comfort and uplift mankind. But it was only a little time till the impulse had grown into a friendship that went beyond any profession or doctrine, a friendship that ripened into a permanent admiration and love for "Joe" Twichell himself, as one of the noblest specimens of his race.

He was invited to the Twichell home, where he met the young wife and got a glimpse of the happiness of that sweet and peaceful household. He had a neglected, lonely look, and he loved to gather with them at their fireside. He expressed his envy of their happiness, and Mrs. Twichell asked him why, since his affairs were growing prosperous, he did not establish a household of his own. Long afterward Mr. Twichell wrote:

Mark made no answer for a little, but, with his eyes bent on the floor, appeared to be deeply pondering. Then he looked up, and said slowly, in a voice tremulous with earnestness (with what sympathy he was heard may be imagined): "I am taking thought of it. I am in love beyond all telling with the dearest and best girl in the whole world. I don't suppose she will marry me. I can't think it possible. She ought not to. But if she doesn't I shall be sure that the best thing I ever did was to fall in love with her, and proud to have it known that I tried to win her!"

It was only a brief time until the Twichell fireside was home to him. He came and went, and presently it was "Mark" and "Joe," as by and by it would be "Livy" and "Harmony," and in a few years "Uncle Joe" and "Uncle Mark," "Aunt Livy" and "Aunt Harmony," so to remain until the end.

LXIX

A LECTURE TOUR

JAMES REDPATH, proprietor of the Boston Lyceum Bureau, was the leading lecture agent of those days, and controlled all, or nearly all, of the platform celebrities. Mark Twain's success at the Cooper Union the year before had interested Redpath. He had offered engagements then and later, but Clemens had not been free for the regular circuit. Now there was no longer a reason for postponement of a contract. Redpath was eager for the new celebrity, and Clemens closed with him for the season of 1868–9. With his new lecture, "The Vandal Abroad," he was presently earning a hundred dollars and more a night, and making most of the nights count.

This was affluence indeed. He had become suddenly a person of substance—an associate of men of consequence, with a commensurate income. He could help his mother lavishly now, and he did.

His new lecture was immensely popular. It was a résumé of the *Quaker City* letters—a foretaste of the book which would presently follow. Wherever he went, he was hailed with eager greetings. He caught such drifting exclamations as, "There he is! There goes Mark Twain!" People came out on the street to see him pass. That marvelous miracle which we variously call "notoriety," "popularity," "fame," had come to him. In his notebook he wrote, "Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident; the only earthly certainty oblivion."

The newspapers were filled with enthusiasm both as to his matter and method. His delivery was described as a "long, monotonous drawl, with the fun invariably coming in at the end of a sentence—after a pause." His appearance at this time is thus set down:

> Mark Twain is a man of medium height, about five feet ten, sparsely built, with dark reddish-brown hair and mustache. His features are fair, his eyes keen and twinkling. He dresses in scrupulous evening attire. In lecturing he hangs about the desk, leaning on it or flirting around the corners of it, then marching and countermarching in the rear of it. He seldom casts a glance at his manuscript.

No doubt this fairly presents Mark Twain, the lecturer of that day. It was a new figure on the platform, a man with a new method. As to his manuscript, the item might have said that he never consulted it at all. He learned his lecture; what he consulted was merely a series of hieroglyphics, a set of crude pictures drawn by himself, suggestive of the subject-matter under each new head. Certain columns represented the Parthenon; the Sphinx meant Egypt, and so on. His manuscript lay there in case of accident, but the accident did not happen.

A number of his engagements were in the central part of New York, at points not far distant from Elmira. He had a standing invitation to visit the Langdon home, and he made it convenient to avail himself of that happiness.

His was not an unruffled courtship. When at last he reached the point of proposing for the daughter of the house, neither the daughter nor the household offered any noticeable encouragement to his suit. Many absurd anecdotes have been told of his first interview with Mr. Langdon on the subject, but they are altogether without foundation. It was a proper and dignified discussion of a very serious matter. Mr. Langdon expressed deep regard for him and friendship but he was not inclined to add him

POSTER USED BY MARK TWAIN FOR A BROOKLYN LECTURE, ABOUT 1869. FROM THE LENOX LIBRARY COLLECTION

to the family; the young lady herself, in a general way, accorded with these views. The applicant for favor left sadly enough, but he could not remain discouraged or sad. He lectured at Cleveland with vast success, and the news of it traveled quickly to Elmira. He was referred to by Cleveland papers as a "lion" and "the coming man of the age." Two days later, in Pittsburg (November 19th), he "played" against Fanny Kemble, the favorite actress of that time, with the result that Miss Kemble had an audience of two hundred against nearly ten times the number who gathered to hear Mark Twain. The news of this went to Elmira, too. It was in the papers there next morning; surely this was a conquering hero —a gay Lochinvar from out of the West—and the daughter of the house must be guarded closely, that he did not bear her away. It was on the second morning following the Pittsburg triumph, when the Langdon family were gathered at breakfast, that a bushy auburn head poked fearfully in at the door, and a low, humble voice said:

"The calf has returned; may the prodigal have some breakfast?"

No one could be reserved or reprovingly distant, or any of those unfriendly things with a person like that; certainly not Jervis Langdon, who delighted in the humor and the tricks and turns and oddities of this eccentric visitor. Giving his daughter to him was another matter, but even that thought was less disturbing than it had been at the start. In truth, the Langdon household had somehow grown to feel that he belonged to them. The elder sister's husband, Theodore Crane, endorsed him fully. He had long before read some of the Mark Twain sketches that had traveled eastward in advance of their author, and had recognized, even in the crudest of them, a classic charm. As for Olivia Langdon's mother and sister, their happiness lay in hers. Where her heart went theirs went also, and it would appear that *her* heart, in

spite of herself, had found its rightful keeper. Only young Langdon was not reconciled, and eventually set out for a voyage around the world to escape the situation.

There was only a provisional engagement at first. Jervis Langdon suggested, and Samuel Clemens agreed with him, that it was proper to know something of his past, as well as of his present, before the official parental sanction should be given. When Mr. Langdon inquired as to the names of persons of standing to whom he might write for credentials, Clemens pretty confidently gave him the name of the Reverend Stebbins and others of San Francisco, adding that he might write also to Joe Goodman if he wanted to, but that he had lied for Goodman a hundred times and Goodman would lie for him if necessary, so his testimony would be of no value. The letters to the clergy were written, and Mr. Langdon also wrote one on his own account.

It was a long mail-trip to the Coast and back in those days. It might be two months before replies would come from those ministers. The lecturer set out again on his travels, and was radiantly and happily busy. He went as far west as Illinois, had crowded houses in Chicago, visited friends and kindred in Hannibal, St. Louis, and Keokuk, carrying the great news, and lecturing in old familiar haunts.

LXX

INNOCENTS AT HOME—AND "THE INNOCENTS ABROAD"

HE was in Jacksonville, Illinois, at the end of January (1869), and in a letter to Bliss states that he will be in Elmira two days later, and asks that proofs of the book be sent there. He arrived at the Langdon home, anxious to hear the reports that would make him, as the novels might say, "the happiest or the most miserable of men." Jervis Langdon had a rather solemn look when they were alone together. Clemens asked:

"You've heard from those gentlemen out there?"

"Yes, and from another gentleman I wrote concerning you."

"They don't appear to have been very enthusiastic, from your manner."

"Well, yes, some of them were."

"I suppose I may ask what particular form their emotion took?"

"Oh yes, yes; they agree unanimously that you are a brilliant, able man, a man with a future, and that you would make about the worst husband on record."

The applicant for favor had a forlorn look.

"There's nothing very evasive about that," he said.

There was a period of reflective silence. It was probably no more than a few seconds, but it seemed longer.

"Haven't you any other friend that you could suggest?" Langdon said.

"Apparently none whose testimony would be valuable."

Jervis Langdon held out his hand. "You have at

least one," he said. "*I* believe in you. I know you better than *they* do."

And so came the crown of happiness. The engagement of Samuel Langhorne Clemens and Olivia Lewis Langdon was ratified next day, February 4, 1869.

But if the friends of Mark Twain viewed the idea of the marriage with scant favor, the friends of Miss Langdon regarded it with genuine alarm. Elmira was a conservative place—a place of pedigree and family tradition; that a stranger, a former printer, pilot, miner, wandering journalist and lecturer, was to carry off the daughter of one of the oldest and wealthiest families, was a thing not to be lightly permitted. The fact that he had achieved a national fame did not count against other considerations. The social protest amounted almost to insurrection, but it was not availing. The Langdon family had their doubts too, though of a different sort. Their doubts lay in the fear that one reared as their daughter had been might be unable to hold a place as the wife of this intellectual giant, whom they felt that the world was preparing to honor. That this delicate, sheltered girl could have the strength of mind and body for her position seemed hard to believe. Their faith overbore such questionings, and the future years proved how fully it was justified.

To his mother Samuel Clemens wrote:

> She is only a little body, but she hasn't her peer in Christendom. I gave her only a plain gold engagement ring, when fashion imperatively demands a two-hundred-dollar diamond one, and told her it was typical of her future life—namely, that she would have to flourish on substance, rather than luxuries (but you see I know the girl—she don't care anything about luxuries). . . . She spends no money but her usual year's allowance, and spends nearly every cent of that on other people. She will be a good, sensible little wife, without any airs about her. I don't make intercession for her beforehand, and ask you to love her, for there isn't any use in that—you couldn't

help it if you were to try. I warn you that whoever comes within the fatal influence of her beautiful nature is her willing slave forevermore.

To Mrs. Crane, absent in March, her father wrote:

DEAR SUE,—I received your letter yesterday with a great deal of pleasure, but the letter has gone in pursuit of one S. L. Clemens, who has been giving us a great deal of trouble lately. We cannot have a joy in our family without a feeling, on the part of the little incorrigible in our family, that this wanderer must share it, so, as soon as read, into her pocket and off upstairs goes your letter, and in the next two minutes into the mail, so it is impossible for me now to refer to it, or by reading it over gain an inspiration in writing you. . . ."

Clemens closed his lecture tour in March, and went immediately to Elmira. He had lectured between fifty and sixty times, with a return of something more than $8,000, not a bad aggregate for a first season on the circuit. He had planned to make a spring tour to California, but the attraction at Elmira was of a sort that discouraged distant travel. Furthermore, he disliked the platform, then and always. It was always a temptation to him because of its quick and abundant return, but it was none the less distasteful. In a letter of that spring he wrote:

I most cordially hate the lecture field. And after all, I shudder to think I may never get out of it. In all conversation with Gough, and Anna Dickinson, Nasby, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Wendell Phillips, and the other old stagers, I could not observe that *they* ever expected or hoped to get out of the business. I don't want to get wedded to it as they are.

He declined further engagements on the excuse that he must attend to getting out his book. The revised proofs were coming now, and he and gentle Livy Langdon read them together. He realized presently that with her sensitive nature she had also a keen literary perception. What

he lacked in delicacy—and his lack was likely to be large enough in that direction—she detected, and together they pruned it away. She became his editor during those happy courtship days—a position which she held to her death. The world owed a large debt of gratitude to Mark Twain's wife, who from the very beginning—and always, so far as in her strength she was able—inspired him to give only his worthiest to the world, whether in written or spoken word, in counsel or in deed. Those early days of their close companionship, spiritual and mental, were full of revelation to Samuel Clemens, a revelation that continued from day to day, and from year to year, even to the very end.

The letters to Bliss and the proofs were full of suggested changes that would refine and beautify the text. In one of them he settles the question of title, which he says is to be

THE INNOCENTS ABROAD
or
THE NEW PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

and we may be sure that it was Olivia Langdon's voice that gave the deciding vote for the newly adopted chief title, which would take any suggestion of irreverence out of the remaining words.

The book was to have been issued in the spring, but during his wanderings proofs had been delayed, and there was now considerable anxiety about it, as the agencies had become impatient for the canvass. At the end of April Clemens wrote: "Your printers are doing well. I will hurry the proofs"; but it was not until the early part of June that the last chapters were revised and returned. Then the big book, at last completed, went to press on an edition of twenty thousand, a large number for any new book, even to-day.

In later years, through some confusion of circumstance,

"THE INNOCENTS ABROAD"

Mark Twain was led to believe that the publication of *The Innocents Abroad* was long and unnecessarily delayed. But this was manifestly a mistake. The book went to press in June. It was a big book and a large edition. The first copy was delivered July 20 (1869), and four hundred and seventeen bound volumes were shipped that month. Even with the quicker mechanical processes of to-day a month or more is allowed for a large book between the final return of proofs and the date of publication. So it is only another instance of his remembering, as he once quaintly put it, "the thing that didn't happen."[1]

[1] In an article in the *North American Review* (September 21, 1906) Mr. Clemens stated that he found it necessary to telegraph notice that he would bring suit if the book was not immediately issued. In none of the letters covering this period is there any suggestion of delay on the part of the publishers, and the date of the final return of proofs, together with the date of publication, preclude the possibility of such a circumstance. At some period of his life he doubtless sent, or contemplated sending, such a message, and this fact, through some curious psychology, became confused in his mind with the first edition of *The Innocents Abroad*.

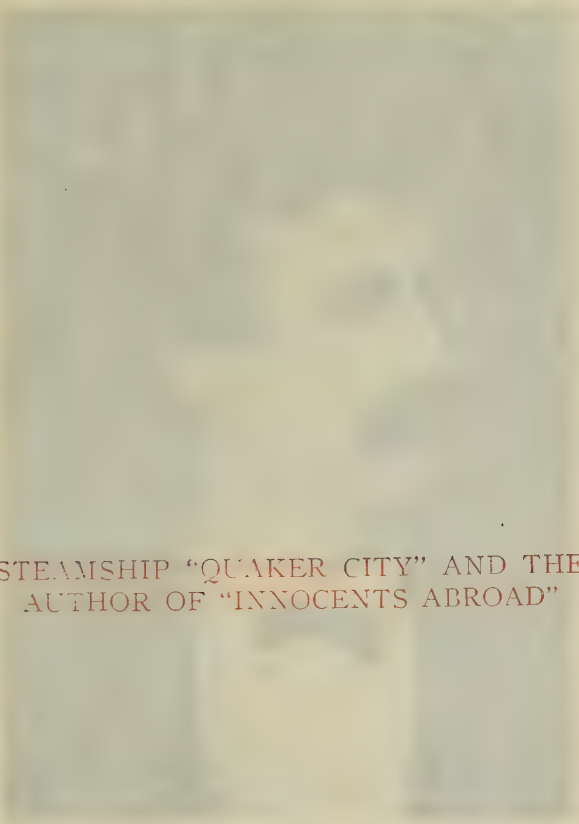
LXXI

THE GREAT BOOK OF TRAVEL

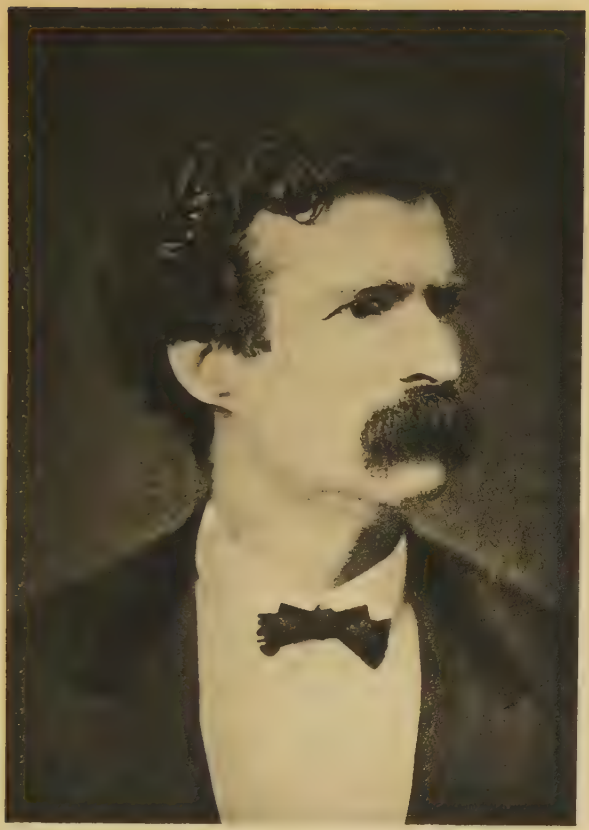
THE INNOCENTS ABROAD was a success from the start. The machinery for its sale and delivery was in full swing by August 1, and five thousand one hundred and seventy copies were disposed of that month—a number that had increased to more than thirty-one thousand by the first of the year. It was a book of travel; its lowest price was three and a half dollars. No such record had been made by a book of that description; none has equaled it since.

If Mark Twain was not already famous, he was unquestionably famous now. As the author of *The New Pilgrim's Progress* he was swept into the domain of letters as one riding at the head of a cavalcade—doors and windows wide with welcome and jubilant with applause. Newspapers chorused their enthusiasm; the public voiced universal approval; only a few of the more cultured critics seemed hesitant and doubtful.

They applauded—most of them—but with reservation. Doctor Holland regarded Mark Twain as a mere fun-maker of ephemeral popularity, and was not altogether pleasant in his dictum. Doctor Holmes, in a letter to the author, speaks of the "frequently quaint and amusing conceits," but does not find it in his heart to refer to the book as literature. It was naturally difficult for the East to concede a serious value to one who approached his subject with such militant aboriginality, and occasionally wrote "those kind." William Dean Howells reviewed



STEAMSHIP "QUAKER CITY" AND THE
AUTHOR OF "INNOCENTS ABROAD"



the book in the *Atlantic*, which was of itself a distinction, whether the review was favorable or otherwise. It was favorable on the whole, favorable to the humor of the book, its "delicious impudence," the charm of its good-natured irony. The review closed:

> It is no business of ours to fix his rank among the humorists California has given us, but we think he is, in an entirely different way from all the others, quite worthy of the company of the best.

This is praise, but not of an intemperate sort, nor very inclusive. The descriptive, the poetic, the more pretentious phases of the book did not receive attention. Mr. Howells was perhaps the first critic of eminence to recognize in Mark Twain not only the humorist, but the supreme genius—the "Lincoln of our literature." This was later. The public—the silent public—with what Howells calls "the inspired knowledge of the simple-hearted multitude," reached a similar verdict forthwith. And on sufficient evidence: let the average unprejudiced person of to-day take up the old volume and read a few chapters anywhere and decide whether it is the work of a mere humorist, or also of a philosopher, a poet, and a seer. The writer well remembers a little group of "the simple-hearted multitude" who during the winter of '69 and '70 gathered each evening to hear the *Innocents* read aloud, and their unanimous verdict that it was the "best book of modern times."

It was the most daring book of its day. Passages of it were calculated to take the breath of the orthodox reader; only, somehow, it made him smile, too. It was all so good-natured, so openly sincere. Without doubt it preached heresy—the heresy of viewing revered landmarks and relics joyously, rather than lugubriously; reverentially, when they inspired reverence; satirically, when they invited ridicule, and with kindliness always.

The Innocents Abroad is Mark Twain's greatest book of travel. The critical and the pure in speech may object to this verdict. Brander Matthews regards it second to *A Tramp Abroad*, the natural viewpoint of the literary technician. The *Tramp* contains better usage without doubt, but it lacks the "color" which gives the *Innocents* its perennial charm. In the *Innocents* there is a glow, a fragrance, a romance of touch, a subtle something which is idyllic, something which is not quite of reality, in the tale of that little company that so long ago sailed away to the harbors of their illusions beyond the sea, and wandered together through old palaces and galleries, and among the tombs of the saints, and down through ancient lands. There is an atmosphere about it all, a dream-like quality that lies somewhere in the telling, maybe, or in the tale; at all events it is there, and the world has felt it ever since. Perhaps it could be defined in a single word, perhaps that word would be "youth." That the artist, poor True Williams, felt its inspiration is certain. We may believe that Williams was not a great draftsman, but no artist ever caught more perfectly the light and spirit of the author's text. Crude some of the pictures are, no doubt, but they convey the very essence of the story; they belong to it, they are a part of it, and they ought never to perish. *A Tramp Abroad* is a rare book, but it cannot rank with its great predecessor in human charm. The public, which in the long run makes no mistakes, has rendered that verdict. The *Innocents* to-day far outsells the *Tramp*, and, for that matter, any other book of travel.

LXXII

THE PURCHASE OF A PAPER

IT is curious to reflect that Mark Twain still did not regard himself as a literary man. He had no literary plans for the future; he scarcely looked forward to the publication of another book. He considered himself a journalist; his ambition lay in the direction of retirement in some prosperous newspaper enterprise, with the comforts and companionship of a home. During his travels he had already been casting about for a congenial and substantial association in newspaperdom, and had at one time considered the purchase of an interest in the Cleveland *Herald*. But Buffalo was nearer Elmira, and when an opportunity offered, by which he could acquire a third interest in the Buffalo *Express* for $25,000, the purchase was decided upon. His lack of funds prompted a new plan for a lecture tour to the Pacific coast, this time with D. R. Locke (Nasby), then immensely popular, in his lecture "Cussed Be Canaan."

Clemens had met Nasby on the circuit, and was very fond of him. The two had visited Boston together, and while there had called on Doctor Holmes; this by the way. Nasby was fond of Clemens too, but doubtful about the trip—doubtful about his lecture:

> Your proposition takes my breath away. If I had my new lecture completed I wouldn't hesitate a moment, but really isn't "Cussed Be Canaan" too old? You know that lemon, our African brother, juicy as he was in his day, has been squeezed dry. Why howl about his wrongs after said wrongs have been

redressed? Why screech about the "damnable spirit of Cahst" when the victim thereof sits at the first table, and his oppressor mildly takes, in hash, what he leaves? You see, friend Twain, the Fifteenth Amendment busted "Cussed Be Canaan." I howled feelingly on the subject while it was a living issue, for I felt all that I said and a great deal more; but now that we have won our fight why dance frantically on the dead corpse of our enemy? The Reliable Contraband is contraband no more, but a citizen of the United States, and I speak of him no more.

Give me a week to think of your proposition. If I can jerk a lecture in time I will go with you. The Lord knows I would like to.[1]

Nasby did not go, and Clemens's enthusiasm cooled at the prospect of setting out alone on that long tour. Furthermore, Jervis Langdon promptly insisted on advancing the money required to complete the purchase of the *Express*, and the trade was closed.[2]

The Buffalo *Express* was at this time in the hands of three men—Col. George F. Selkirk, J. N. Larned, and Thomas A. Kennett. Colonel Selkirk was business manager, Larned was political editor. With the purchase of Kennett's share Clemens became a sort of general and contributing editor, with a more or less "roving commission"

[1] Nasby's lecture, "Cussed Be Canaan," opened, "We are all descended from grandfathers!" He had a powerful voice, and always just on the stroke of eight he rose and vigorously delivered this sentence. Once, after lecturing an entire season—two hundred and twenty-five nights—he went home to rest. That evening he sat, musingly drowsing by the fire, when the clock struck eight. Without a moment's thought Nasby sprang to his feet and thundered out, "*We are all descended from grandfathers!*"

[2] Mr. Langdon is just as good as bound for $25,000 for me, and has already advanced half of it in cash. I wrote and asked whether I had better send him my note, or a due bill, or how he would prefer to have the indebtedness made of record, and he answered every *other* topic in the letter pleasantly, but never replied to that at all. Still, I shall give my note into the hands of his business agent here, and pay him the interest as it falls due.—*S. L. C. to his mother.*

—his hours and duties not very clearly defined. It was believed by his associates, and by Clemens himself, that his known connection with the paper would give it prestige and circulation, as Nasby's connection had popularized the Toledo *Blade*. The new editor entered upon his duties August 14 (1869). The members of the Buffalo press gave him a dinner that evening, and after the manner of newspaper men the world over, were handsomely cordial to the "new enemy in their midst."

There is an anecdote which relates that next morning, when Mark Twain arrived in the *Express* office (it was then at 14 Swan Street), there happened to be no one present who knew him. A young man rose very bruskly and asked if there was any one he would like to see. It is reported that he replied, with gentle deliberation:

"Well, yes, I should like to see some young man offer the new editor a chair."

It is so like Mark Twain that we are inclined to accept it, though it seems of doubtful circumstance. In any case it deserves to be true. His "Salutatory" (August 18th) is sufficiently genuine:

> Being a stranger, it would be immodest for me to suddenly and violently assume the associate editorship of the Buffalo *Express* without a single word of comfort or encouragement to the unoffending patrons of the paper, who are about to be exposed to constant attacks of my wisdom and learning. But the word shall be as brief as possible. I only want to assure parties having a friendly interest in the prosperity of the journal that I am not going to hurt the paper deliberately and intentionally at any time. I am not going to introduce any startling reforms, nor in any way attempt to make trouble. . . . I shall not make use of slang and vulgarity upon any occasion or under any circumstances, and shall never use profanity except when discussing house rent and taxes. Indeed, upon a second thought, I shall not use it even then, for it is unchristian, inelegant, and degrading; though, to speak truly, I do not see how house rent

and taxes are going to be discussed worth a cent without it. I shall not often meddle with politics, because we have a political Editor who is already excellent and only needs to serve a term or two in the penitentiary to be perfect. I shall not write any poetry unless I conceive a spite against the subscribers.

Such is my platform. I do not see any use in it, but custom is law and must be obeyed.

John Harrison Mills, who was connected with the *Express* in those days, has written:

I cannot remember that there was any delay in getting down to his work. I think within five minutes the new editor had assumed the easy look of one entirely at home, pencil in hand and a clutch of paper before him, with an air of preoccupation, as of one intent on a task delayed. It was impossible to be conscious of the man sitting there, and not feel his identity with all that he had enjoyed, and the reminiscence of it that he seemed to radiate; for the personality was so absolutely in accord with all the record of himself and his work. I cannot say he seemed to be that vague thing they call a type in race or blood, though the word, if used in his case for temperament, would decidedly mean what they used to call the "sanguine."

I thought that, pictorially, the noble costume of the Albanian would have well become him. Or he might have been a Goth, and worn the horned bull-pate helmet of Alaric's warriors; or stood at the prow of one of the swift craft of the Vikings. His eyes, which have been variously described, were, it seemed to me, of an indescribable depth of the bluish moss-agate, with a capacity of pupil dilation that in certain lights had the effect of a deep black. . . .

Mr. Mills adds that in dress he was now "well groomed," and that consequently they were obliged to revise their notions as to the careless negligée which gossip had reported.[1]

[1] From unpublished *Reminiscences* kindly lent to the author by Mr. Mills.

LXXIII

THE FIRST MEETING WITH HOWELLS

CLEMENS'S first period of editorial work was a brief one, though he made frequent contributions to the paper: sketches, squibs, travel-notes, and experiences, usually humorous in character. His wedding-day had been set for early in the year, and it was necessary to accumulate a bank account for that occasion. Before October he was out on the lecture circuit, billed now for the first time for New England, nervous and apprehensive in consequence, though with good hope. To Pamela he wrote (November 9th):

> To-morrow night I appear for the first time before a Boston audience—4,000 critics—and on the success of this matter depends my future success in New England. But I am not distressed. Nasby is in the same boat. To-night decides the fate of his brand-new lecture. He has just left my room—been reading his lecture to me—was greatly depressed. I have convinced him that he has little to fear.

Whatever alarm Mark Twain may have felt was not warranted. His success with the New England public was immediate and complete. He made his headquarters in Boston, at Redpath's office, where there was pretty sure to be a congenial company, of which he was presently the center.

It was during one of these Boston sojourns that he first met William Dean Howells, his future friend and literary counselor. Howells was assistant editor of the *Atlantic*

at this time; James T. Fields, its editor. Clemens had been gratified by the *Atlantic* review, and had called to express his thanks for it. He sat talking to Fields, when Howells entered the editorial rooms, and on being presented to the author of the review, delivered his appreciation in the form of a story, sufficiently appropriate, but not qualified for the larger types.[1]

His manner, his humor, his quaint colloquial forms all delighted Howells—more, in fact, than the opulent seal-skin overcoat which he affected at this period—a garment astonishing rather than esthetic, as Mark Twain's clothes in those days of his first regeneration were likely to be—startling enough, we may believe, in the conservative atmosphere of the *Atlantic* rooms. And Howells—gentle, genial, sincere—filled with the early happiness of his calling, won the heart of Mark Twain and never lost it, and, what is still more notable, won his absolute and unvarying confidence in all literary affairs. It was always Mark Twain's habit to rely on somebody, and in matters pertaining to literature and to literary people in general he laid his burden on William Dean Howells from that day. Only a few weeks after that first visit we find him telegraphing to Howells, asking him to look after a Californian poet, then ill and friendless in Brooklyn. Clemens states that he does not know the poet, but will contribute fifty dollars if Howells will petition the steamboat company for a pass; and no doubt Howells complied, and spent a good deal more than fifty dollars' worth of time to get the poet relieved and started; it would be like him.

[1] He said: "When I read that review of yours, I felt like the woman who was so glad her baby had come white."

LXXIV

THE WEDDING-DAY

THE wedding was planned, at first, either for Christmas or New-Year's Day; but as the lecture engagements continued into January it was decided to wait until these were filled. February 2d, a date near the anniversary of the engagement, was agreed upon, also a quiet wedding with no "tour." The young people would go immediately to Buffalo, and take up a modest residence, in a boarding-house as comfortable, even as luxurious, as the husband's financial situation justified. At least that was Samuel Clemens's understanding of the matter. He felt that he was heavily in debt—that his first duty was to relieve himself of that obligation.

There were other plans in Elmira, but in the daily and happy letters he received there was no inkling of any new purpose.

He wrote to J. D. F. Slee, of Buffalo, who was associated in business with Mr. Langdon, and asked him to find a suitable boarding-place, one that would be sufficiently refined for the woman who was to be his wife, and sufficiently reasonable to insure prosperity. In due time Slee replied that, while boarding was a "miserable business anyhow," he had been particularly fortunate in securing a place on one of the most pleasant streets—"the family a small one and choice spirits, with no predilection for taking *boarders*, and consenting to the present arrangement only because of the anticipated pleasure of your

company." The price, Slee added, would be reasonable. As a matter of fact a house on Delaware Avenue—still the fine residence street of Buffalo—had been bought and furnished throughout as a present to the bride and groom. It stands to-day practically unchanged—brick and mansard without, Eastlake within, a type then much in vogue—spacious and handsome for that period. It was completely appointed. Diagrams of the rooms had been sent to Elmira and Miss Langdon herself had selected the furnishings. Everything was put in readiness, including linen, cutlery, and utensils. Even the servants had been engaged and the pantry and cellar had been stocked.

It must have been hard for Olivia Langdon to keep this wonderful surprise out of those daily letters. A surprise like that is always watching a chance to slip out unawares, especially when one is eagerly impatient to reveal it.

However, the traveler remained completely in the dark. He may have wondered vaguely at the lack of enthusiasm in the boarding idea, and could he have been certain that the sales of the book would continue, or that his newspaper venture would yield an abundant harvest, he might have planned his domestic beginning on a more elaborate scale. If only the Tennessee land would yield the long-expected fortune now! But these were all incalculable things. All that he could be sure of was the coming of his great happiness, in whatever environment, and of the dragging weeks between.

At last the night of the final lecture came, and he was off for Elmira with the smallest possible delay. Once there, the intervening days did not matter. He could join in the busy preparations; he could write exuberantly to his friends. To Laura Hawkins, long since Laura Frazer, he sent a playful line; to Jim Gillis, still digging and washing on the slopes of the old Tuolumne hills, he wrote a letter which eminently belongs here:

ELMIRA, N. Y., *January 26, 1870.*

DEAR JIM,—I remember that old night just as well! And somewhere among my relics I have your remembrance stored away. It makes my heart ache yet to call to mind some of those days. Still it shouldn't, for right in the depths of their poverty and their pocket-hunting vagabondage lay the germ of my coming good fortune. You remember the one gleam of jollity that shot across our dismal sojourn in the rain and mud of Angel's Camp—I mean that day we sat around the tavern stove and heard that chap tell about the frog and how they filled him with shot. And you remember how we quoted from the yarn and laughed over it out there on the hillside while you and dear old Stoker panned and washed. I jotted the story down in my note-book that day, and would have been glad to get ten or fifteen dollars for it—I was just that blind. But then we were so hard up. I published that story, and it became widely known in America, India, China, England, and the reputation it made for me has paid me thousands and thousands of dollars since. Four or five months ago I bought into the *Express* (I have ordered it sent to you as long as you live, and if the bookkeeper sends you any bills you let me hear of it). I went heavily in debt—never could have dared to do that, Jim, if we hadn't heard the Jumping Frog story that day.

And wouldn't I love to take old Stoker by the hand, and wouldn't I love to see him in his great specialty, his wonderful rendition of Rinalds in the "Burning Shame!" Where is Dick and what is he doing? Give him my fervent love and warm old remembrances.

A week from to-day I shall be married—to a girl even better and lovelier than the peerless "Chapparal Quails." You can't come so far, Jim, but still I cordially *invite* you to come anyhow, and I invite Dick too. And if you two boys *were* to land here on that pleasant occasion we would make you right royally welcome. Truly your friend, SAML. L. CLEMENS.

P. S.—California plums are good, Jim, particularly when they are stewed.

It had been only five years before—that day in Angel's Camp—but how long ago and how far away it seemed to

him now! So much had happened since then, so much of which that was the beginning—so little compared with the marvel of the years ahead, whose threshold he was now about to cross, and not alone.

A day or two before the wedding he was asked to lecture on the night of February 2d. He replied that he was sorry to disappoint the applicant, but that he could not lecture on the night of February 2d, for the reason that he was going to marry a young lady on that evening, and that he would rather marry that young lady than deliver all the lectures in the world.

And so came the wedding-day. It began pleasantly; the postman brought a royalty check that morning of $4,000, the accumulation of three months' sales, and the Rev. Joseph Twichell and Harmony, his wife, came from Hartford—Twichell to join with the Rev. Thomas K. Beecher in solemnizing the marriage. Pamela Moffett, a widow now, with her daughter Annie, grown to a young lady, had come all the way from St. Louis, and Mrs. Fairbanks from Cleveland.

Yet the guests were not numerous, not more than a hundred at most, so it was a quiet wedding there in the Langdon parlors, those dim, stately rooms that in the future would hold so much of his history—so much of the story of life and death that made its beginning there.

The wedding-service was about seven o'clock, for Mr. Beecher had a meeting at the church soon after that hour. Afterward followed the wedding-supper and dancing, and the bride's father danced with the bride. To the interested crowd awaiting him at the church Mr. Beecher reported that the bride was very beautiful, and had on the longest white gloves he had ever seen; he declared they reached to her shoulders.[1]

[1] Perhaps for a younger generation it should be said that Thomas K. Beecher was a brother of Henry Ward Beecher. He lived and died in Elmira, the almost worshiped pastor of the Park Congregational Church. He was a noble, unorthodox teacher. Samuel

It was the next afternoon when they set out for Buffalo, accompanied by the bride's parents, the groom's relatives, the Beechers, and perhaps one or two others of that happy company. It was nine o'clock at night when they arrived, and found Mr. Slee waiting at the station with sleighs to convey the party to the "boarding-house" he had selected. They drove and drove, and the sleigh containing the bride and groom got behind and apparently was bound nowhere in particular, which disturbed the groom a good deal, for he thought it proper that they should arrive first, to receive their guests. He commented on Slee's poor judgment in selecting a house that was so hard to find, and when at length they turned into fashionable Delaware Avenue, and stopped before one of the most attractive places in the neighborhood, he was beset with fear concerning the richness of the locality.

They were on the steps when the doors opened, and a perfect fairyland of lights and decoration was revealed within. The friends who had gone ahead came out with greetings, to lead in the bride and groom. Servants hurried forward to take bags and wraps. They were ushered inside; they were led through beautiful rooms, all newly appointed and garnished. The bridegroom was dazed, unable to understand the meaning of things, the apparent ownership and completeness of possession.

At last the young wife put her hand upon his arm:

"Don't you understand, Youth," she said; that was always her name for him. "Don't you understand? It is ours, all ours—everything—a gift from father!"

But even then he could not grasp it; not at first, not

Clemens at the time of his marriage already strongly admired him, and had espoused his cause in an article signed "S'cat!" in the Elmira *Advertiser*, when he (Beecher) had been assailed by the more orthodox Elmira clergy. For the "S'cat" article see Appendix I, at the end of last volume.

until Mr. Langdon brought a little box and, opening it, handed them the deeds.

Nobody quite remembers what was the first remark that Samuel Clemens made then; but either then or a little later he said:

"Mr. Langdon, whenever you are in Buffalo, if it's twice a year, come right here. Bring your bag and stay overnight if you want to. It sha'n't cost you a cent!"

They went in to supper then, and by and by the guests were gone and the young wedded pair were alone.

Patrick McAleer, the young coachman, who would grow old in their employ, and Ellen, the cook, came in for their morning orders, and were full of Irish delight at the inexperience and novelty of it all. Then they were gone, and only the lovers in their new house and their new happiness remained.

And so it was they entered the enchanted land.

NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE
817.4C59W
C001 V030
WHAT IS MAN? AND OTHER ESSAYS NEW YORK
3 2611 00063494 5